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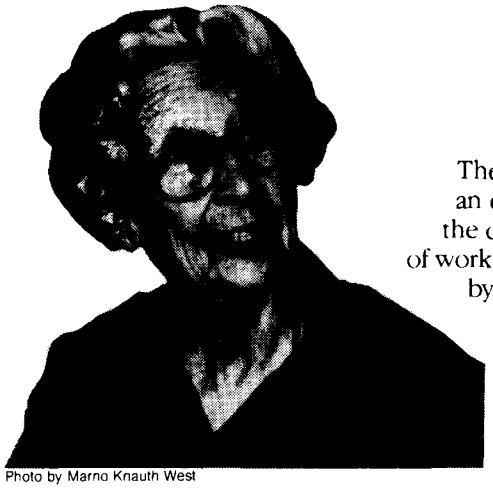

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Out of My Mind . . . . . .

Science Education for the Non-Scientist

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

Although I have been teaching physics and related subjects for some thirty years, it has never occurred to me to think of myself as an educator. An educator, I have always thought, is either a dean or someone who has taken at least one course in education. While I did once get an offer to become a dean—to which, incidentally, I replied that I was either too old or too young to become a dean—I have never taken a course in education. For better or worse, physicists, like most scientists, are simply set adrift in the classroom, and one hopes for the best. The results, needless to say, are mixed; but since we are dealing, in large part, with apprentice physicists, we can probably safely assume that their interest in the field will carry all of us through. I. I. Rabi once remarked to me that nascent physicists seem to be able to survive any amount of bad teaching. Rabi never had, at least until he received his Ph.D., anyone he can recall who was a good teacher. Einstein's only favorable recollections of *his* teachers dated back to the year he spent in a progressive high school in Switzerland. When he went to college in Zurich, he simply cut most of his classes figuring, correctly in his case, that he could teach himself more, and better, physics than he could acquire in the classroom. This attitude was not lost on his teachers, who seem to have thought that he was—although the phrase was not yet current—something of a "flake."

During the past year, however, under the auspices of the Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar Program, I had the occasion to visit a half-dozen college campuses located in the eastern part of the United States. Apart from offering formal lectures, one of the most significant aspects of this program is the opportunity for local scholars to discuss with the visitor problems in education. At first, when these problems were presented to me, I felt a little like a eunuch in a seraglio who is being interviewed about the sexual proclivities of the several ladies therein. But being a reasonably social animal, I felt that I should give the matter sufficient thought so that I could say *something*. After some time elapsed, in what the French call *l'esprit de l'escalier*, I decided to put down on paper all of those things that I had meant to say, but had been too slow-witted actually to say when the questions were raised. It used to be pointed out that the French army was perfectly prepared to fight the previous war. I am now more or less prepared to respond to the questions that were asked of me last year.

All of these questions concern how to teach science to the non-scientist. This is not exactly a novel concern, and what I have to say about it may not be very novel either; but perhaps I can articulate what some of the problems and opportunities are. In my view, before one can discuss *what* to teach the non-scientist, one must ask oneself *why bother* to teach non-scientists science at all. In thinking about this, I was lead to re-read C. P. Snow's celebrated Rede Lecture, which he delivered in 1959. It was in this lecture that Snow introduced his much-debated notion of the "two cultures." Snow was, of course, perfectly aware that there are not simply *two* cultures. This obvious point has often obscured the arguments that Snow was trying to present. Practitioners of medieval French and of cog-

JEREMY BERNSTEIN is professor of physics at the Stevens Institute of Technology and a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. His latest book is *Science Observed*.

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nitive psychology have engaged in heated arguments—some of which I have witnessed —that they, too, represent "cultures" that should be a part of every student's intellectual baggage. For some reason, whenever I have heard these discussions, I have been reminded of a definition of Unitarianism that a mathematician once told me. "Its practitioners," he said, "believe that there is, at *most*, one God." There are at least two cultures: that of the scientifically literate and that of the scientifically illiterate, and the question that concerns me is how to take from the former and add to the latter.

Snow's reasons, I found after re-reading him, are not, in my view, entirely adequate. He seems to have had two concerns. The first I might describe by the term *cultural deprivation*. Snow spent a good deal of his time among non-scientists who, according to him, gave "a pitying chuckle at the news of scientists who have never read a major work of English literature." Since he does not name these unfortunates, they are safe in their Neanderthal anonymity. But Snow, dear man, rose to their defense. "Once or twice," he writes, "I have been provoked and have asked the company how many of them could describe the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The response was cold: it was also negative." The first thought that occurred to me upon reading this was, "So what!" Put on this level, is it really more important that, say, a Cambridge classics don be able to define entropy than, for example, that P. A. M. Dirac be able to read the Upanishads in Sanskrit? (The late J. Robert Oppenheimer *was* able to read the Upanishads in Sanskrit; but that is another matter.) If we had the time and the capacity, we would all probably be pleased if we could read Sanskrit. But no college administrator that I have ever heard of has proposed making this a compulsory requirement for getting an undergraduate degree.

The precise question I am raising is why, then, are these administrators in apparently unanimous agreement that one, or more, science course should be compulsory. Snow's second concern, as I read him, was that unless science is more widely taught, there will be a shortage of qualified scientists and technicians in many countries. While this may indeed be true, it is also beside the point, if the point is the issue of teaching science to people who have not the slightest intention of becoming either scientists or technicians. What, then, is the point?

I think that there are basically three points. The first is what seems to me to be the simple fact that many non-scientists have a real curiosity about science. This fact, which is evident to those of us who write about science for the general public, did not seem to occur to Snow. One gets the impression that he feels that science is something that should be rammed down the reluctant gullets of classics majors because it is good for them, just as the learning of Latin was considered good for one when I went to high school. It never seems to enter Snow's head that his non-scientist friends might have the same sort of curiosity about the origins and destiny of the universe as the very scientists who created, for example, the theory of the big bang.

In fact, something that has always bothered me about Snow is his remoteness from real science, which is evident in nearly everything he wrote and especially in his unfortunate, posthumously published book *The Physicists*, which is so full of mistakes of detail that in reading it one does not know whether to laugh or cry. Even in his Rede Lecture, the very lecture in which he laments the breech between scientist and non-scientist, he reveals that, when it came to contemporary physics, he did not really understand what he was talking about.

For example, at one point Snow discusses the impact of the discovery made in 1956 that nature does not respect parity symmetry —the symmetry between left- and right-handedness. Apart from the fact that he never explains what this discovery was, he attributes it to an experiment—an *experiment!*— done by T. D. Lee and C. N. Yang at Columbia University. It is true that Lee was at Columbia, but Yang was at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and neither man had done an experiment since they had been in graduate school. (Yang's encounters with experimental apparati as a graduate student in Chicago inspired a local rhyme: "Where there's a bang, there's Yang.") Lee and Yang suggested a whole class of experiments, some of which were done at Columbia, some at the University of Chicago, and some at the National Bureau of Standards, and none of which are described by Snow.

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Here was a golden opportunity, if there ever was one, to explain some deep science to the layman, an opportunity that Snow let slip away. One wonders if Snow understood the physics of Lee and Yang's discovery himself. In fact, at the time, these experiments were front-page news, and the physicists who performed them had their hands full explaining them to an excited and curious general public. But then, to repeat, the first reason for teaching science to non-scientists is that many of these non-scientists have a genuine desire to learn about science, and this, after all, is the best reason for teaching anything to anyone.

The second reason is what I myself call *technological bewilderment*. Most of us, myself included, are increasingly surrounded by objects that we use daily but whose workings are a total mystery to us. This thought struck me forcedly about a year ago. One day, for reasons I can no longer reconstruct, I was looking around my apartment when it suddenly occurred to me that it was full of objects that I did not understand. A brief catalogue included my color television set, a battery-operated alarm watch, an electronic chess-playing machine, and a curious fountain pen that tells the time. Here I am, I thought, a scientist surrounded by domestic artifacts whose workings I don't understand. I then began asking several of my colleagues in theoretical physics if they had the same feeling. (I didn't ask the experimenters I know because *those* people really do understand how things work.) They, too, reported similar feelings.

My first impulse was to try to build something—say, a radio—with the hope that if I could actually put it together with my own hands I might understand it, so to speak, on its own terms. I went so far as to order an electronics kit from a large scientific mail-order house in New Jersey. Following directions, I managed to make several radios, one of which actually worked. The only problem was that the components of the kit were so modular that I couldn't understand them either. A few of my friends have actually designed and built small computers. I envy them this ability. It then occurred to me that an entire course could be taught on how one non-trivial thing, say a small computer, actually works. I don't mean how to program a computer (this is a skill that is now readily being acquired by elementary school students), I mean actually building one—designing the logic circuits and the rest. If such a course were taught for lay people, I would take it myself.

The third reason for teaching science to non-scientists is what I call *technological necessity*. It is a fact of modern life that all of us are confronted by decisions, largely taken on our behalf by others, that have a significant technological component. Two obvious examples are the decisions related to energy and to nuclear weapons. It is crucial, in my view, that as many people as possible have enough of a technical background to be able to separate the purely technical aspects of these decisions from the political and moral ones. No one should be afraid of participating in making such decisions just because some "expert" says that there are technical factors involved that are beyond the layman's understanding. I do not believe, for example, that there is a single technical element in the general energy question that is beyond the capacity of anyone who will familiarize himself with the issues and learn to add and multiply large numbers. The latter may sound absurd, but if I had been at those gatherings where Snow had badgered his fellow guests with arcane matters involving entropy, I would have changed the discussion by asking questions like, How many gallons are in a barrel of oil? and Is it true, as Max Frisch claims in his novella "Man in the Holocene," that if the Arctic ice melts owing to the so-called greenhouse effect—which might become serious if we insist on burning more coal—then "New York would be under water"? These are matters that can affect the way we live now and the way in which our descendants will live in the future.

Lest I be accused of raising scientific and technical questions without answering them, let me comment briefly on the two questions I have raised. They are prototypical. The reason why it is important to know what a barrel of oil is, is that the barrel is the arbitrary unit by which quantities of oil are measured. Oil is, in fact, not shipped or stored in barrels, but in tanks or drums, which hold amounts measured in barrels. The standard barrel is a concept that dates back to the early fifteenth century. Henry VI of England decided that a barrel of eels should be thirty gallons, but his successor, Edward IV, raised this to forty-two

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gallons. After the first discovery of oil, in Titusville, Pennsylvania, in 1859, there was a general chaos as to how many gallons were in the standard barrel. This matter was settled in 1916 by an act of Congress that declared that the standard oil barrel was to be forty-two gallons. A gallon of oil, incidentally, supplies enough energy to keep 130 one-hundred-watt light bulbs burning for one hour. (A barrel of whiskey, which is probably enough to keep a large number of us lit for many hours, is usually thirty and a half gallons.)

We use something less than six billion barrels of oil a year in this country; so the next time one reads of a well that produces a thousand barrels a day—a very, very substantial well—one can use one's pocket calculator and figure out how much of a dent this makes in solving our oil problem. Knowing this scarcely requires a Ph.D. in physics, but without knowing it how can one even begin to think quantitatively about the general energy question?

Felix Rohatyn, the physicist turned investment banker, whose clear thinking and determination pulled New York City through its fiscal crisis, and who is a master at dealing with just the kind of politico-technical problem that the general energy question presents, once told me that the key element in all these matters is to bring things down to choices. "Once," he noted, "you bring it down to choices, it really gets reasonably simple." That is just what the energy problem is—a question of choices. One begins with a total figure for the amount of energy we need for transportation, heating, electricity, and the rest and then begins to list the choices for supplying that energy, and their consequences. In doing this, one must manipulate large numbers—trillions, for example—and one must have the appropriate numbers to manipulate. Isn't this just the sort of thing we should be teaching non-scientists? If we don't, how are we going to arrive at sensible decisions? People will be at the mercy of any energy huckster who happens to have a loud voice and ready access to a television studio.

Max Frisch's confusion can be settled by taking an ice cube and putting it in a completely full glass of water and watching what happens. After the water spills—due to sticking in the ice cube—*nothing* happens. The ice cube melts, and the water it has displaced gets replenished with no change in the surface level of the water in the glass. This is characteristic of floating ice such as the ice in the Arctic. If it melted—leaving Greenland aside since the ice there is *not* floating—the level of the oceans would not rise at all. No one is quite sure what would happen to Greenland if the temperature in the Arctic rose enough to begin melting ice. The climate might change so drastically that, in fact, the ice on Greenland might get thicker. But of one thing everyone who has studied the matter is sure, and that is that a warming of a few degrees in Antarctica would be a collective disaster. The Antarctic ice is attached to the continent and is not floating. A recent Department of Energy report indicates that if we keep burning coal and other hydrocarbons at something like the present rate, or greater, the global temperature could rise five degrees in considerably less than a century. This would come about because the burning of these hydrocarbons produces carbon dioxide, which traps the heat that is re-radiated from the earth after the sun heats it. There is no possible technology that can stop carbon dioxide from being formed when, say, coal is burned. That formation is simply part of the burning reaction. Given this, and given the other pollution problems caused by burning coal, how much of the stuff can we afford to burn; and if we decide that we had better be cautious about burning all we have, what then are the choices? Here, again, is a matter that non-scientists had better learn to think about before we are all drowning in the approximately 150-foot rise in sea level that would occur if all the ice in Antarctica were to melt.

Having offered three reasons to teach science to non-scientists—curiosity, technological bewilderment, and technological necessity—I would now like to offer some ideas on how courses addressed to these reasons might be taught. Some of this I have already hinted at. It is, I think, clear that the three kinds of courses I have in mind are quite different, and would serve differing needs and interests. The curiosity course is, by now, of a fairly familiar kind. My own interest in physics was aroused by just such a course, taught by the late Philipp Frank in the spring of 1948, when I was a freshman at Harvard. I doubt that anyone, before or since, has taught a better

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one. But nowadays "Physics for Poets" courses are fairly ubiquitous. Gerald Feinberg, who is now the chairman of the physics department at Columbia, has been teaching such a course at that university for the past several years. The last time he taught it, it had an enrollment of over two hundred students—some of them, presumably, poets and none of them scientists. Feinberg has had a good deal of experience lecturing and writing for lay people, so he was able to lead his charges expertly through a thicket of quarks, relativity, gluons, black holes, and the rest, with relatively few casualties. He was surprised, and pleased, to discover just how much his students were able and willing to absorb. Before it was over, in fact, a few of them decided that they might want to major in physics.

The present generation of students has been exposed to television programs such as "Nova" and "Cosmos," which, as bad as the latter was, drew the largest audience ever to watch a public television series. I do not really have any special words of wisdom about teaching a curiosity course, except that it clearly takes someone to teach it who is actively engaged in science. To be good, it must come from someone who is really on top of the material. Otherwise it simply becomes a digest of other people's popularizations. That can be done, but it is a little like eating Wonder bread; it won't do you much harm, but it is not very exciting either.

I have never heard of anyone who has tried to teach a technological bewilderment course. Since I am as nearly bewildered as anyone else, I certainly have never tried to teach one myself. I think that I would very likely electrocute myself the first day. On the other hand, I have taught something very like a technological necessity course, and I would like to describe a bit of it, as well as to describe a remarkable course I witnessed and participated in during one of my Phi Beta Kappa visits.

In the spring of 1980 I was a visiting professor at Princeton University, where I taught a course under the auspices of the Humanities Council in a program that is called the Literature of Fact. The nominal subject of the course was science writing for scientists. All of my students, ranging from sophomores to graduate students—fourteen in all—were science majors of some kind. Only a small number were physicists. I decided very early in the game that the only way a course like that could work was if we all learned some new science and wrote about it. I decided that a subject that we might learn about was energy. Since I had a small budget for outside lecturers, I was able to invite a variety of my colleagues to be interviewed by the students, who then wrote up these interviews as part of their course work. A final ten-thousand-word essay was required that would answer the question, How would you solve the energy problem? It was to be written in a style appropriate for a magazine article.

The first day of class I asked the students a few things about their views on energy. In particular, I asked them how many were in favor of using nuclear power. I was not very surprised when no hands were raised. I then asked how many of them understood how a nuclear reactor worked. I was again not very surprised when no one raised his hand. Most physics majors never learn how an actual nuclear reactor works, since this is considered to be nuclear engineering. I then invited four experts on nuclear power to talk to my class. They were David Rossin, a nuclear engineer who is a leading spokesman for the use of nuclear power; Henry Kendall, the founder of the Union of Concerned Scientists, who vehemently opposes nuclear power; Norman Rasmussen, the M.I.T. professor whose reactor safety study is still the basis for most reactor safety estimates; and Ted Taylor, who had just finished serving on President Carter's Three Mile Island commission. I invited them on different weeks since I was not interested in having a live debate, but rather a series of thoughtful interviews.

The students at first must have found this somewhat bewildering. I think they were especially impressed by Rasmussen, whose competence and integrity are obvious the minute he begins speaking, and by Ted Taylor, who is not an advocate of nuclear power, to put it mildly, but who told the students that he could find no scenario, however farfetched, that could have turned Three Mile Island into any more of an accident in terms of threats to human life than it was—which was, essentially, no threat. I took no position in any of these discussions and simply let the students boil around in their own intellectual

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stew. The net result of all of this was that, in their final reports, *every* student, however reluctantly, said that nuclear power was an essential short-term part of the solution to the energy problem. During the course, we had had an opportunity to examine all of the possible choices of power sources, including solar and wind power. It had come down to a matter of choices; and while no choice was perfect, the students decided that nuclear power, on the basis of what they had learned, was an acceptable imperfect choice. Perhaps another group of students would have reacted differently to what was presented to them. That these students were science majors is not, I think, very relevant to the workability of a course like this. When we began, none of them knew much, if anything, about the actual details of the general energy problem. The students—and their teacher—learned about it as they went along.

The other example of a technological necessity course is one that was designed specifically for non-science majors. I encountered it on my Phi Beta Kappa visit to the University of Delaware. I am reluctant to attempt to give credit to any particular individual for creating the course, since I do not know the details, but my tour guide and host was the astronomer H. L. Shipman. On the day I visited, he was teaching it in collaboration with a biologist and a philosopher. The three teachers were present in the classroom. The subject that day was world hunger. In previous classes, I gathered, the biologist had explained the facts about hunger and had made it clear what the resources were. On this particular day, the discussion, led by the philosopher, had to do with choices—specifically: Whom shall we choose to feed? This is, obviously, an agonizing question. The moral dilemma is clear. Feeding people raises health standards, especially the health standards of children. Hence, it produces a growth in world population, which, in turn, lowers the standard of living for everyone. The discussion got quite personal. Individual students were asked if they were willing to lower their standards of living—for example, to reduce their consumption of meat, which is a notoriously inefficient way to use both food and energy—in order to feed people they did not know. What are our moral and ethical obligations? How do we balance our self-interests against what is possible and what is right? These are immensely difficult questions and the students, rightly so, were deeply serious about them. The discussion affected all of us, and, one would like to think, helped the students to think about a future that is, after all, theirs.

We live in a complex, dangerous, and fascinating world. Science has played a role in creating the dangers, and one hopes that it will aid in creating ways of dealing with these dangers. But most of these problems cannot, and will not, be dealt with by scientists alone. We need all the help we can get, and this help has got to come from a scientifically literate general public. Ignorance of science and technology is becoming the ultimate self-indulgent luxury.

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The Crime of a Happy Childhood

ARISTIDES

I sometimes think I may have peaked in my seventeenth year. Life had not yet started to seem complicated. I had no notion that I would one day earn my living doing intellectual work, and consequently hadn't begun to live in my mind. Fear of death was not allowed to curdle joy in living. I smoked like Gary, Indiana, ate like a cossack, and followed wherever instinct and laughter led. When school wasn't in session I went to bed at five in the morning, woke at two or three the following afternoon, and in between slept like a rutabaga. My daddy was rich, my ma good-looking, and even in bleak Chicago it seemed perpetually like the summertime of Gershwin's song. Or so I have come to imagine.

But have I only imagined it? Were my childhood and youth really as happy as they are in my memory? Optimism, it has been said, is the preferred philosophy for viewing the past: every day further away seems better and better. And is it not in any case rather boorish to claim a happy childhood in the first place? The modern scenario for human development does not call for a happy childhood. (Screenwriters here include Sigmund Freud and, among others, Ernest Hemingway, who once said that the first requisite for a writer was to have an unhappy childhood.) The modern scenario calls for a childhood filled with frustration, rebellion, alienation. Childhood, in this script, is the time for being awkward, misunderstood, spiritually wounded. It is a fine time, too, for building up psychological gripes: father didn't show me enough love, mother showed me too much. Not that everyone had to have had an unhappy childhood. It is commonly agreed that childhood may well have been extremely pleasant for, say, bullies, cheerleaders, the indelicate, and the great galloping hordes of the insensitive. But for anyone with the least sensitivity, for those unhappy few (millions), growing up had to be, let's face it, hell.

George Orwell had an unhappy childhood, if his essay "Such, Such Were the Joys . . ." is any evidence, and so most likely did J. D. Salinger, judging by his character Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*. Nearly all modern stories or memoirs of growing up are accounts of sadness, loss, secret terror. This being so, my own relatively happy childhood—note that I have already begun to qualify it—is increasingly coming to seem an embarrassment. A colleague of mine seems much more in the main flow. He had recently been made a member of his high school's distinguished alumni hall of fame, and at the festivities at which he was installed he read a poem he had composed for the occasion. Much of this poem is given over to misgiving recollected in tranquillity. "Most of us hated it, you know. High school," the first line of the second stanza begins. There is also a certain amount of belated pleasure at the ill fortune of those who, when young, seemed to fit in, who are dealt with thus:

> It's not the world. And what I have to say
> to those who don't fit in is, don't despair.
> The best jock of my time now has a bay
> window, an ugly wife, almost no hair
> and sells used cars and probably is gay.
> So is the cutest girl, that cheerleader.
> I do not mock their choice of what lust is
> But only note there is some kind of justice.

That stanza makes me a bit edgy. Although I was far from the best jock in my high school class, I did, I fear, fit in, smoothly and even joyously. Will I, as the logic of this stanza implies, one day have to pay for this? Today, in my forties, I still retain quite a lot of my hair, am married to a beautiful woman, and when last tested checked out heterosexual—

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and, mutatis mutandis, prefer to keep things this way.

When the poem was read and its author had stepped down, he was roundly congratulated by students at his old high school, many of whom told him that the poem spoke for them. This is not altogether surprising to me, for the sentiments in the poem, I believe, express the received opinion on the subject of growing up in our time. Growing up is nowadays officially understood to be a bad job.

Perhaps the reason it is thought to be a bad job is that so many artists and intellectuals seem to have had unhappy childhoods. Here an interesting question crops up. Is it because their childhoods were unhappy that these men and women became artists and intellectuals? Did their unhappiness as children force them into the dreamy world of the artist, to hide in the books of the intellectual? And if there is anything at all to this, is it possible, further, that their unhappy early years have given so many artists and intellectuals what one thinks of as their adversary disposition toward the society in which they live and toward life in general? Roomy questions, these, with a great deal of space for disagreement about their answers.

Notions about when one is and is not supposed to be reasonably happy can be tyrannous. Once word of them gets around, people seem to do their damnedest to live up to them. We have for some time now been told that old age is not exactly a barrel of laughs; childhood is weighted with many miseries; and adolescence is even worse. In middle age we can look forward to the thing called "the midlife crisis." One's twenties and thirties are not without their own special perils: loneliness, confusion, conflict. If all of this is so, then it means, if my calculations are correct, that we can figure on roughly thirty-five to forty minutes of enjoyment in a normal life span.

And yet for most of us, at least in this country, life is not so dire an affair. To be sure, in childhood one can fall under the sway of a despotic parent; one can suffer sorely from physical problems such as bad skin or early obesity; one can be placed under the lash of extreme shyness or a sad stutter or one of a hundred other exacting psychological trials. But most of us have been lucky enough to elude these various afflictions, and not everyone who has been visited by them has allowed them to spoil the days of his or her childhood. True, in childhood and adolescence it seems as if one has less control over one's life than at any other time. Constraints on external freedom are never greater: one cannot come and go as one pleases; one cannot readily indulge one's interests or desires; one feels, in fine, less in charge of one's destiny than perhaps one ever will again. And yet, and yet, and yet . . . "Junior year in high school," a friend of mine recently remarked, aping a beer commercial, "it don't get no better than that."

I am not ready to go quite so far, but I must say that whenever I think of my youth it seems to me to have passed very pleasantly. And I think of it a good deal. Among the things I think about in connection with it is that I had one enormous advantage: parents who put no special pressures on me; who asked only that I be a decent fellow; who labored under no theories of child rearing but apparently merely trusted their instincts; and who, finally, had lives of their own to live and felt very little need to insert themselves more than was necessary in mine, yet nonetheless never for a moment allowed me to feel other than certain that, should I need them, they would be there to help. I don't quite know how my parents were able to bring this off, but I am immeasurably grateful that they did. Unable to do likewise when it came to raising my own children, to my gratitude I have to add my admiration.

I may have a closer connection to my childhood than many other people because I continue to live in the city in which I grew up. In fact, I now live only a few miles from the neighborhood in which our family lived during the better part of my childhood and adolescence. Proust had his *madeleine*, but I have my Chevy, in which I find myself often driving through my old neighborhood, filled with a complex combination of yearnings and regrets. Two of my closest boyhood friends are still among my closest friends. At restaurants, movies, cultural and sports events I fairly frequently run into acquaintances from school days. Some, it is true, I would as soon not run into. But most give pleasure, and reassurance that life retains some continuity. I recall, in this connection, a meeting at a pro basketball game with a friend with whom as a young man I used to play cards and whom I

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hadn't seen for roughly twenty years. "Can you believe it!" he said, as if twenty years had never happened. "The Bucks are four-and-a-half-point dogs!"

H. L. Mencken was a man who lived in the city in which he grew up. The city, of course, was Baltimore, and Mencken lived much the better part of his life in the very house in which he was born at 1524 Hollins Street. Mencken was a rooted man, and rootedness was a quality he admired. In "On Living in Baltimore" he wrote: "Human relations, in such a place, tend to assume a solid permanence. A man's circle of friends becomes a sort of extension of his family circle. His contacts are with men and women who are rooted as he is. They are not moving all the time. Thus abiding relationships tend to be built up, and when fortune brings unexpected changes, they survive those changes." You can't go home again, it has been famously said, but who said you had to leave in the first place?

A few years ago I had impressive evidence of H. L. Mencken's continuing connection with the city of Baltimore, when I gave the H. L. Mencken Memorial Lecture at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in downtown Baltimore. On a sunny Saturday September afternoon some four hundred people showed up to listen to a talk about Mencken—and less to listen to the particular lecturer than to honor the lecturer's subject. The audience was not mostly made up of academics, either, but of an interesting assortment of young and old from a variety of social classes, all of whom seemed to be united by their regard for Henry Louis Mencken, their city's last great writer. A number of people in the audience knew Mencken personally—among them were a member of the old Saturday Night Club and Mencken's old bartender at the Rennert Hotel—or were distant cousins or friends of friends of the writer. Since Mencken had been born (1880) nearly a century before and had already been dead (1956) nearly twenty-five years, I found this testimony to Mencken's rootedness extremely moving.

One of the consequences of living in the city of one's upbringing is that it throws one back upon one's youth more than if one lived elsewhere. Streets, buildings, even empty lots have interesting associations. I have gone to certain of the same restaurants for thirty years, to the same theaters and ball parks for forty years, man and boy. I have never used that phrase "man and boy" before, or quite comprehended its meaning. But as I travel about my old neighborhood, about the streets of my city, I realize that this is what I am, man and boy—and both simultaneously.

I turn a corner and am in front of the house of a grade school girl friend. Downtown in the city I pass a theater and recall having seen Nat "King" Cole in it when I was fifteen. Driving down a block of a street called Fairfield in the old neighborhood I mentally click off the names of all the kids who lived on it; and I recall, too, the car of the father of a friend of mine, a creamy beige Packard convertible, the last model of its kind before Packard went out of business, soon to be followed by my friend's father, who has been dead for more than a quarter of a century now. I begin to sound like some Faulkner character—and of a rather boring kind—whose family has lived on the same land for seven generations. Do I, I sometimes wonder, give way to nostalgia too readily? If nostalgia be a disease, then I, so near my old neighborhood, am practically living in a contagious ward.

My friends and I talk endlessly about the old days. It is our great subject, topic number one. When four or five of us get together, we bathe in it: "Remember the time that Goldy. . ." "Didn't the Goss have his mother's paneled Chrysler convertible on that trip? . . ." "Dan passed out in the back seat. . . ." "Frankie Summers was the tailback on that team. . . ." Every one of us has heard these stories, some of them countless times, and the purpose in retelling them is less to convey information than to refuel memory. As we sit around a restaurant table, or in one of our apartments, going over these stories yet again, what we really want is to recapture the past, if only fleetingly. Sometimes we will sit for three, four, five hours, one story of the old days leading into another, someone offering a correction of a small detail, someone filling in a bit of additional material, someone else bringing a story up-to-date ("She married some guy from Houston, and still lives there, last I heard").

I love these sessions, which do not come about a regular intervals. Usually they are called together when a friend is in from out of town; so sometimes we do not meet for ten

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months or for a year. Laughter is always among us when we do meet; on occasion laughter that hurts, it comes in such great gusts. Yet for all our laughter, for all the joy in these meetings, when they are over and I drive home, usually alone, I tend to feel a tinge of sadness. It is sadness of the sort I associate with a phrase Proust's father once used: "the poetry and melancholy of memory."

Why this sadness? Sometimes it occurs to me that these sessions with my old friends resemble nothing so much as cheerful wakes. We sit around and talk about the deceased. We remember what a grand fellow he was. This is no time for petty criticisms, or ungenerous recollections. Not that we lie, exactly. We tell the truth and nothing but the truth, yet not quite the whole truth. Exaggerations have a way of creeping in. An old friend recalls the time he and I, at seventeen, left his parents' apartment in the middle of the night to join an all-night card game in progress, returning home at six in the morning, having won four hundred dollars. I recall the figure at closer to fifty dollars, but then it may be that his memory is merely allowing for inflation, and I would not think to contradict him, except in print. At these wakes we are dedicated to calling up, respectfully, the deceased's best moments. Fortunately, there were a great many of these—enough to stage many a wake. The deceased in this perhaps overly elaborate metaphor is, of course, our youth. How wondrous it is to recall! How sad to know it is gone!

And it is gone, we all know that. Looking around at one another—at our graying hair, receding hairlines, thickening middles, lined faces—how could we possibly know otherwise? All we want is to get our youth in some sort of reasonable focus. The older we grow the blurrier it becomes. Like the only remaining photograph of someone once loved, none of us wants completely to lose sight of our early years, a time we all loved. So we talk about it, often, nearly every chance we get. Doing so makes us happy. For better or worse, looking back is, as they nowadays say, our drug of choice.

If looking back be a drug, I have in recent months had two very generous fixes. Not one but two reunions linking me to my past had been organized. One was for the members of a college fraternity I had joined at a state university at which I had spent a year; the other was a reunion of my grammar school graduating class, a group that dispersed, lo, some thirty-one years ago. These two reunions were to be held less than a month apart. I signed up to attend both. With my steady backward glance, with my love of lingering in the past, I should have hated to miss either one.

Reunions are by now a standard American institution. Schools at all levels have them: at ten-, twenty-five-, and fifty-year intervals. Military units—companies, regiments, divisions—have them. So do fraternities and sororities. So, too, people trained at a certain time or in a certain line of work. The *New York Times* not long ago reported on a convention that also served as a reunion for people who have worked in intelligence—a reunion, that is, of spies. Among the other functions they perform, reunions are a great balm to the itch of curiosity. Attending them is rather like going through the pages of an album of before-and-after photographs. The reunion provides a chance to discover whatever happened to the girl you adored and the boy you despised; to observe if the good flourished and the wicked went under; to acquire, with a good deal of luck, a clearer sense of what you yourself were like when young.

Of my two reunions, I had more complicated feelings about the one being put on by my old fraternity. It was during that year at the state university I attended that I changed more radically than I ever expect to change again. In that time I had gone from someone who greatly valued his popularity to someone who had replaced geniality with iconoclasm; from someone fairly secure in his notions about life to someone quite uncertain about the purpose of life; from someone confident about the future to someone who knew only that he felt utterly ill at ease about proceeding down the same track he had been traveling. In that year books and a passion for ideas had interposed themselves between me and my comfortable outlook upon the world. One of the things I had come to dislike was being a member of a fraternity; that mine was, moreover, the best fraternity of its kind only made it worse. I longed to be a freer, more independent spirit. Still, when many years later I told an extremely intelligent woman that I was in a fraternity in college, not only was she not

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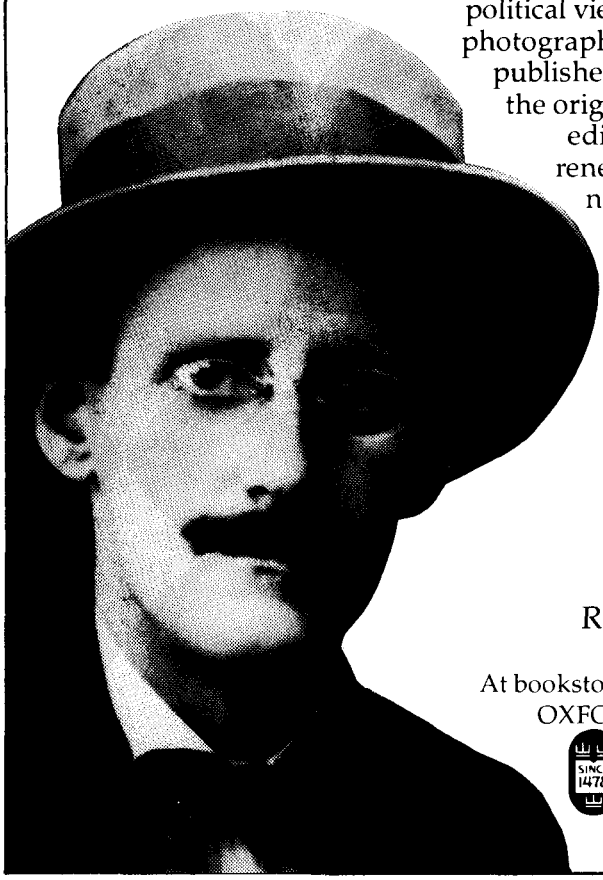

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surprised but she was able to name the very fraternity to which I belonged. "Of course," she said, "you were a Phi Ep—one of the elite effete." Dismaying.

Because I didn't feel I belonged, and felt it less and less with every passing year, I felt a bit of a fraud attending this reunion. Fraternity members used to call one another "brother," but spiritually I felt I had long since ceased to be part of this particular family. I was going to this reunion less out of warm feeling than out of voyeurism. I felt, as an older friend once wrote to me on a very different occasion, that these people worshiped different gods than I. They also drove different cars, and the way I found the place of the reunion was by following a fellow, driving an elegant blue Mercedes, who looked like yet another of the elite effete—and turned out to be exactly that.

Mercedes there seemed to be in plenty in the parking lot of the expensive health club at which the reunion was held; also no shortage of BMW's, Jaguars, Cadillacs, Lincolns, and an occasional ample Buick or Oldsmobile. It would have been difficult to have found a nonleather seat in the parking lot. For the most part these men, or at least the majority of them, spent the better part of their waking hours thinking about money getting money. The majority of them, I gather, think about it penetratingly and to good effect. I doubt there were many men at this reunion who earn less than $70,000 a year and an ample number earn a great deal more. Physicians and dentists and lawyers, accountants and executives and men who run their own businesses—these are the jobs of the brothers, some two hundred and fifty of whom were at this reunion.

When I walked into the reception room I felt as if I had walked onto a crowded movie set. Much vigorous gab, smoke, clinking of ice cubes, raucous laughter. Although the reunion was on a Saturday night, wives weren't invited. It was all men, and easily the most noticeable man in the room was a contemporary of mine, a man in an air force uniform, a bird colonel with much, in the service phrase, fruit salad upon his chest. Men greeted other men they hadn't seen in twenty or more years, often with startled surprise quickly easing into bonhomous talk of the old days. Some had come from Florida, one from Los Angeles. Everyone seemed quite pleased to check in with one another after long absences. Many others had stayed in close touch over the years.

Physical changes were of course the first thing one notices. These were not men who took on the usual modern hirsute appurtenances: beards, cavalry mustaches, muttonchops, and the rest. But lots of hair had turned gray (my own included); lots more was missing in action. Some tricky hairdos had emerged, many of these designed to cover up baldness, and I thought I spotted a few toupees. A good deal of weight had been redistributed—some men had put on twenty or thirty pounds, but others seemed to have taken off twenty or thirty pounds—but total tonnage seemed about the same. A few of them looked much better as men than they had as boys, time having rounded off the rough angularity of their faces. In some the same old boyish face shown out from under what William James, in describing his colleague Josiah Royce, once called "an indecent exposure of forehead." When I was a freshman in this fraternity some of the seniors seemed men of great physical maturity to me; now we were all contemporaries and fellow members in a new and much larger fraternity—the middle-aged.

In an uncomplicated way I had not anticipated, I found myself pleased to be among them. Not that the few phonies and creeps did not still seem to me phony and creepy, but they seemed to matter less, if at all—I waved at them from a distance or exchanged a few words of heartfelt falsity. One fellow whom I remember as quite dull now seemed newly aggressive. Had he had assertiveness training? If so, it had worked wonders, turning a once-dull boy into a man who was still dull but now pushy. The institution—the fraternity, that is—mattered even less. What did matter was the fact that we were together a quarter of a century and more ago, and had survived, and shared common—and comic—memories, and it all felt rather good.

Not that everyone had survived intact. One fellow with whom I pledged had had, a few years out of school, a nervous breakdown from which he had never quite recovered. Another fellow's wife had had a stroke. Yet another fellow, in the class before mine, a great fop as I remembered him, had had business and

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marital disasters, and was now driving a cab (in Brooks Brothers shirts? I wondered). None of these men had come; reunions are notoriously uncomfortable events for people with failure or troubles to report. But for the most part there was not much to report in the way of obvious failures or troubles. At one point after dinner everyone who had been married was asked to stand, and everyone did; anyone who had been married more than once was asked to remain standing, and out of a room of roughly two hundred fifty, fifteen or sixteen of us kept our feet; two men, it turned out, had married thrice. This was a very stable group. Whatever its quotient of personal disappointment or general unhappiness, very few had come to real grief. A business bankruptcy appeared to mark the outer limits of their conception of a disaster.

To be a mite less than modest I must report that one of the most interesting people I met that evening was myself—or, more precisely, the self I was between eighteen and nineteen years old. I seem nearly to have forgotten him. Throughout the night I was reminded of funny lines I had got off, of madcap things I had done, most of which I had forgotten. For example, a fraternity brother named Roger Lewis had been able to postpone a difficult accounting examination, one that had many others in the fraternity quite terrified, by getting a local doctor to agree to check him into the university hospital for observation. Before going in he made everyone miserable with his boisterous bragging about his cleverness in evading the exam. So, once he had checked into the hospital, it seems that I telephoned, impersonating his doctor, and instructed the nurse on duty that I wanted young Mr. Lewis cleaned out by enema and sent over to my office for X rays. I scarcely recall having done this, but I was immensely pleased to take credit for it.

My guess is that I was the only bookish man in the room, though I was occasionally surprised to hear someone say he had read something I had written in a magazine. A fellow I sat near at dinner wanted to know what kind of novels I wrote. At first I thought he mistook me for a novelist but then it became clear that he misunderstood the word *novel* to be synonymous with the word *book*. Can there be a more mistaken assumption than that which holds that because a man or woman has been to a university he or she has acquired an interest in reading? Besides, most of us remain happily ignorant about one another's work, and happily so.

I mentioned bookishness at all only because, for better *and* worse, it can set one apart in a crowd, even a crowd whose members have been college educated. On this particular evening I discovered I did not wish to be set apart but rather to join in the communal good feeling in the room. In my thinking about this evening I had overlooked a very obvious point: insofar as this old fraternity could be said to have stood for anything, I disliked what it stood for; but I did like a great many of the boys (now men) who had been a part of it. This, doubtless, was the work of "Time, which," as Proust says, "causes us to forget our antipathies and our disdains and even the reasons which once explained their existence." When the hour came to leave, I found myself lingering, not wanting yet to depart. In the lobby someone said that another such reunion was to be held in ten years, though, he said, he doubted it would be as successful as this one. In the parking lot some of us spoke of getting together, meeting in a restaurant, say, for an evening of talk, five, perhaps six months from now. It would be very nice, everyone agreed. I agreed, too, although I am confident it will never happen.

Our grammar school reunion, which met three weeks later, was a much smaller affair. It met in a banquet room at a not very exclusive country club in a suburb northwest of the city. Of a class of thirty-nine kids, twenty middle-aged adults showed up. Some members of the class could not be located, a few others couldn't care less, one woman lived in Australia, and another had years before committed suicide. Unlike the fraternity reunion, where I was in regular touch with no one, at this one two of my closest friends were in attendance. We had in fact been talking about it for weeks before, and we drove out to it together, the three of us in one car, speculating on what time might have done to these people whom we last knew as children.

Husbands and wives were invited, but at least half of us arrived de-spoused. Thirty or so people were in the room. I felt less of an air of prosperity here than at the fraternity reunion. One or two classmates who had been born into the working class had, it appeared,

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remained there. One man had become a high school science teacher, another was a social worker—jobs that none of the fraternity brothers would ever, even for a moment, have considered. In the foyer I ran into the first of my old classmates. His skin was unwrinkled, his smile was unchanged, his hair was intact and combed in exactly the same way he had combed it thirty-one years ago. He was in every way the same, except he had grown much wider, as if someone had inflated him, or fooled with his horizontal knob. I felt, in fact, as if I were looking at him in a fun-house mirror. This entire evening, as it turned out, had something of a fun-house quality—which is to say, it was noisy, everything in it appeared slightly distorted, it wasn't very much fun.

I don't know quite what I expected, but one of the things I was most struck with was how little, in thirty-one years, everyone seemed to have changed. The boy of thirteen who could never quite look anyone in the eye was now a man heading toward fifty who still could not quite look anyone in the eye. The tall shy girl to whom I never seemed able to find anything to say was now a tall shy woman to whom I was still unable to find anything to say. The boy whose shirt was always sticking out of his pants now was a man whose shirt was sticking out of his vest. The girl I remember as always a bit overactive was now a woman, wearing more eye shadow than a raccoon, who could not stop talking.

Speaking with a girl who over the years had turned into a gracious, handsome woman, I asked about her brother, who was a few years older than we were. "It's sweet of you to ask," she said. "Fred's had a stroke." I later learned that someone else in the room had had quadruple bypass heart surgery. (Don't they ever do a simple single bypass?) The boy with whom I first snuck off to smoke cigarettes was a widower. Strokes, heart surgery, dead wives—Oh God, I thought, has it come to be that time already?

We stood around with drinks in our hands, cocktail-party style, mingling and chatting. A buffet with Mexican food had been set up—a taco bar, it was called. Then we were asked to take seats at tables scattered around the room for such program as there was to be. This had mostly to do with reporting the results of a questionnaire that had been sent out to each of us months before. These results were read by one of the three chief organizers of the reunion, a man who as a boy had been one of our class leaders. He looked much the same, though he made much ado about his personal gains (a potbelly) and losses (some hair). Statistically, we turned out to be a fairly average, fairly boring group: great longevity of marriages, two-point-something-average children. One of us—a woman who now lived in Florida and didn't attend—was said to have married four times. Another of us was about to become a grandmother. There was much laughter about who was voted sexiest, most likely to succeed, best adjusted, and so forth. Then a serious moment: two of our classmates were mentioned for contributions to society. One was a doctor who specialized in contagious diseases, the other was an accountant who had worked for Jewish charities. After noting this our master of ceremonies said, in a throwback phrase that nearly broke my heart, "Nice going, guys."

Why—I ask for the second time in this essay—this sadness? Perhaps because this reunion was yet another piece of evidence for the death of youth, and the death of youth, as Montaigne says, is "in essence and in truth a harder death than the complete death of a languishing life or the death of old age." Especially is this so when that youth has been a happy one, for happiness not only cannot be recaptured, it can scarcely be described, let alone analyzed. Unhappiness, on the other hand, analyzes beautifully. Perhaps this is why so many intellectuals are drawn to it. Sadness, too, implies a criticism of the world. Happiness is an expression of joy in it. And for those of us born lucky—without physical or mental infirmity and to parents who loved us—happiness was never so uncomplicatedly, so lyrically expressed as in youth. Many people write or become psychoanalyzed in order to bury the ghosts of their childhood. I wish, as best I can, to revive the ghosts of mine: to set free that pudgy child in a uniform of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, that young boy shooting baskets in the rain, that adolescent reading Willard Motley's *Knock on Any Door* while lying on his side on a sunny day in a public park, that youth returning home at three in the morning after a night of talk and laughter with his friends. It is very important to me that I not let those fellows die.

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Dear George Orwell

A Personal Letter

JOHN WAIN

DEAR GEORGE ORWELL,

First, I owe you a word of explanation. I never met you in the flesh; I was always just one of your readers—so why this familiarity? I want to set down my thoughts on where you stand today, now that 1984 has almost come, and how your ideas on (mostly) social and political themes seem to me to have weathered the last three or four decades. Why do I set them down in the form of a personal letter rather than a straight critical essay?

The short answer is that I have written my share of straight critical essays about you, three or four throughout the years, and my motive for adding this last one—for surely it will have to be the last—is personal. Wherever you are out there, I want these few pages to be me speaking to you. After all, you have spoken to me in a very personal way, directly affecting the way I have thought and lived and written, for forty years now.

I first became interested in you as a literary critic when your articles used to appear in *Tribune* and *Horizon* during World War II, when I was an undergraduate. The first books of yours I devoured, and practically got by heart, were *Inside the Whale*, which had come out just before the war, and *Critical Essays*, which came out just after it. I was very literary in those days; I never read anything that I couldn't think of as "literature" or as "about literature," and yet the devoted professional academics with whom I was mostly in touch—among my elders, at any rate—seemed to me somewhat Brahminical. They had made the study of literature into a way of life; and, in love with great writing as I was, I felt dubious about this. What I found in your articles was the reassurance that reading books, reading even the greatest books, was a part of normal life, that one listened to what the great writers had to say because it was about living, that reading their books meshed in directly with a hunger and a relish for experience and also with the normal aspirations and

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wishes of a decent person, including the wish for social justice.

At that time I had no political opinions, except a vague general sympathy with the social revolution that started in England with the electoral landslide of 1945, bred in its turn by an equally vague but strong conviction that "the old gang" had been in power too long. ("A family with the wrong members in control.") As I gradually came to have some notion of politics, both domestic and international, it was two books of yours, *The Road to Wigan Pier* and *Homage to Catalonia,* that opened my eyes most. What I had in you was an instinctive trust: I knew I was hearing the voice of a decent, unselfish man, ready to make sacrifices for others, while at the same time enjoying his own life and getting on with it; and also the voice of a writer, which I hoped to be.

I was twenty-five when you died, and I shall never forget the shock, the sense of a profound *personal* disappointment, with which I heard the news. There were to be no more books and articles by George Orwell! I felt robbed, and to some extent I still feel the same way. If you had lived a normal life span, you would now be in your honored old age, or at any rate dead only recently; we should have had the benefit of your commentary on all the things that have happened in the world—horrifying, grotesque, cheerful, and just plain farcical—all through those decades, and on some of the people who, for interested motives or just from stupidity, have misinterpreted your work and travestied your opinions.

Not long after your death I began to write about you here and there, taking you seriously at a time when you were still very far from the classic status you seem to have today. And because your work had gone in very deep, coloring my attitudes and also, I dare say, my style, I have more than once seen references to myself in print (though usually, I admit, in a puzzled, whatever-happened-to sort of tone) as "Orwell's natural successor." If there is an implied compliment here, it is of course too big for me and I disclaim it; but it is one strand in the rope that seems to connect me directly with you. And that is why I am writing to you, dear George Orwell, and not just about you, though of course my primary purpose is to have many readers over my shoulder—in this case, sharp-witted American university people, who don't share the particular pressures and prejudices of the society that molded you and me, but probably take some interest in it and draw their own parallels.

To stick for the moment to matters of domestic concern to you and me—to begin my swim in shallow water before striking out for distant shores—let me go back to that matter of literary criticism. In the years since 1950 it has changed almost out of recognition; indeed, literary criticism of the kind you used to enjoy writing and reading has almost ceased to exist. It always was, of course, an art peculiarly open to

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contamination, but in your day the chief danger to watch out for was straight intellectual dishonesty of a political kind. You put the matter as neatly as it needs to be put in an essay "Literature and the Left":

> Left-wing literary criticism has not been wrong in insisting on the importance of subject-matter. It may not even have been wrong, considering the age we live in, in demanding that literature shall be first and foremost propaganda. Where it has been wrong is in making what are ostensibly literary judgements for political ends. To take a crude example, what Communist would dare to admit in public that Trotsky is a better writer than Stalin—as he is, of course? To say "X is a gifted writer, but he is a political enemy and I shall do my best to silence him" is harmless enough. Even if you end by silencing him with a tommy-gun you are not really sinning against the intellect. The deadly sin is to say "X is a political enemy; therefore he is a bad writer." And if anyone says that this kind of thing doesn't happen, I answer merely: look up the literary pages of the left-wing press, from the *News Chronicle* to the *Labour Monthly*, and see what you find.

That kind of tendency, of course, is a permanent danger and comes from all sides of the political spectrum; but what has really scuppered literary criticism has nothing to do with politics as such; it stems from one large, simple fact that in your lifetime had not appeared on the horizon: namely, the invasion of modern literature by the educational system. In the world in which you (and I) grew up, schools and colleges acknowledged the existence of literature by driving pupils, with varying degrees of coercion as needed, through "the classics"—taking the word to mean everything from Greek and Latin to the standard works of English literature, all of them old enough to have historical references and linguistic points that needed explanation. In the decade following your death, this was largely abandoned in favor of a policy of feeding the young a compulsory diet of what are taken to be the "significant" works of contemporary writing. This has two results that are evident at a glance. First, it cuts out the common reader altogether. Up to our epoch, when the educational system taught "the classics," it largely accepted from the ordinary cultivated reader the notion of which books "the classics" consisted of. They were the ones that had been enjoyed and recommended and passed from hand to hand for two or three generations at least—generations not of educationists or literary bureaucrats but simply people who liked reading books. That built-in safeguard has now gone. The people who decide what the young must read are now the same ones who, in any age, make fashionable reputations; and anyone with any knowledge of literary history knows that such people have always made grotesque mistakes, which later generations have quietly corrected. Sanity, in these matters, is much more likely to be achieved if the reader with no ax to grind, that "common reader" with whom Johnson in his "Life of Gray" "rejoiced to concur," can get a

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hearing. What we have now is a kind of totalitarianism, in that the same people who sit on the literary panels, advise publishing houses, and write the literary pages of newspapers also lay down what books young people shall read in their formative years.

The second result is equally glaring. We now have a generation of children in school, and college, who meet books for the first time in the classroom, and see the reading of novels, short stories, and poetry as a school activity like math or science. And it is a second generation: the teachers themselves first met literature in the classroom, and were encouraged from the start to see it as a *moyen de parvenir*. From the start they have been taught that reading a serious book—almost, reading any book at all—is a merit-accumulating activity and that they must be on the lookout for clever things to say about it. Now, literary criticism is in fact a difficult art. To comment on a book, to arrive at an unbiased literary judgment free of irrelevances, is something that very few people can do, though for some reason we behave as if the young, en masse, ought to be able to do it. Books that make their point without fuss, without much in the way of surface complexities, and without obvious technical innovations are the hardest of all, because they throw the critic back on his or her own human resources. Much the easiest way of talking or writing about a literary work is to explain its obscurities, to unravel its tangles, to point out its oblique allusions. So that we have now a generation of teachers and critics whose attitude is that the best book is the one that needs the most explanation. This attitude began to show up twenty years ago in literary criticism, and, not surprisingly, it has now shown up in the kind of book that gets written. When James Joyce said that he put plenty of puzzles into his work, "so as to keep the professors busy and ensure my fame," he was probably indulging his mocking sense of humor. But, humor or no, that is exactly what has happened.

Where complexities do not exist, modern literary criticism will manufacture them, as the body makes its own cholesterol. I should like to hear your comments on structuralism and the other strategies for getting between literature and the ordinary civilized reader. This getting-between is of course perfectly deliberate; the new literary class is a priesthood, and the first thing a priesthood must do is to devise a language that is unintelligible to outsiders. Sociologists are a priesthood, too, but they are less harmful because they are motivated by a simple wish to make something out of nothing and so create jobs for one another.

I mentioned Joyce a moment ago, and to think of him is to be reminded of what an excellent critic you were, as well as how far removed from present-day attitudes. As a young man, drudging away as a prep-school teacher and working in more or less complete isolation, you

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got hold of *Ulysses* and read it with generous excitement and what seems to me complete understanding. And though throughout your life you referred to Joyce quite frequently in passing, your best criticism of him comes right at the beginning and is contained in a letter to an individual, never intended for print. Evidently you had recommended that your friend Brenda Salkeld read *Ulysses*, and she had confessed herself puzzled ("What is Joyce after?"). The eager, energetic, and yet not uncritical pages in which you poured out to her your enjoyment of *Ulysses* and your view of what Joyce was doing seem to me the perfect introduction to the book, worth more than all the products of the Joyce industry with its assembly lines. That letter, of December 1933, represents literary criticism in its purest form—you are simply trying to share your taste for a book that seems to you important with a friend you know well, and feel affection for, and who you feel confident would like the book as much as you do if certain initial difficulties and strangenesses were removed. And all for the best of motives, indeed the only motive that makes good criticism—"Joyce interests me so much that I can't stop talking about him once I start."

But then Joyce and the other great modern writers had not been put in front of you in the classroom; you had not been taken through them by instructors who had in turn been taken through them by instructors—it was all simply a great meadow in which you wandered. By your own account, you first read D. H. Lawrence at a time when you had never heard his name—he was just one more contributor to the magazine you were reading, and something inside you twitched and said, "This man is interesting." They don't let young people make that kind of discovery for themselves anymore, and so, in a very real sense, no writer is "interesting" in that old way, bursting in on the young mind like a great fountain of rocket stars.

And now to leave our parochial concerns and enter the main body of this letter. I want to talk first of things about which your view was so substantially correct that you either said, or clearly anticipated, virtually the whole truth about them, and second, about matters that have taken an unexpected turn since your death.

First, those things you put your finger on and got right. Here, of course, the main one, overarching all the others, is the behavior of the Communist party and the official Left generally, both in Moscow and outside it. For you, I suppose Spain was the turning point. Up to then, as an English Socialist with your roots in Robert Owen and William Morris, you were not very deeply engaged in the rights and wrongs of the Soviet regime and had not very much to say about it. Your experience in Spain altered that, which is why *Homage to Catalonia* is one of your most

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important books as well as the book containing some of your best individual pages. It was in Spain, alternating between trench warfare and dodging about the streets, sleeping in the open, and generally on the run from the secret police, that the realization sank in that the Soviet Union, so far from marching at the head of the oppressed masses of the world, as its propaganda claimed, was in fact just another big power-machine working cynically for its own interests. The beautiful and slightly dotty brotherhood-of-man socialism and egalitarianism you describe so movingly as it swept through Catalonia in the early days of the Civil War, and which you rightly show as typically Spanish because it has a quixotic literal-mindedness at its heart, was brutally crushed, because, in the last analysis, a revolutionary government in that corner of Europe and at that time simply did not fit Stalin's chess game. As a result, brave men who had suffered wounds and exhaustion while fighting for the cause of the people were flung into filthy prisons where many of them groaned out their lives, a fate which, in fact, very nearly happened to you. When you returned to England and tried to tell the truth about what you knew was happening, you ran slap into the deviousness, the chicanery, the unwritten but all-powerful censorship that was and is the mark of the Communist and his fellow traveler. Communists hated you because you saw through them and said so; they still hate you for the same reasons and still (you won't be surprised to hear) use the same weapons against you. Some of them produce routine denunciations of you and your work, which satisfies hard-core opinion among their own ranks; but others, realizing that you have readers among the young, set out to undermine your influence from within, claiming to admire you but actually working to destroy your credibility among those readers. The technique is to represent you as a founding father of the present-day Left—so that it is perfectly fitting to keep your grave tended and even to lay flowers on it—but as someone who has been left behind by the developing situation and can't any longer be taken seriously. When done skillfully, this is a highly effective technique, and some of your most untiring enemies have managed to muddy the waters so successfully that they are habitually named as your admirers and inheritors. I can offer only one piece of practical advice in this matter to people who might wonder whether they are being conned or not. The mark of all such anti-Orwell smear jobs is that they underplay *Homage to Catalonia*. Not to mention it at all might excite comment, but they manage to glide over it in a few sentences, leaving the inexperienced reader with the impression that it has been dealt with and "placed," whereas in fact it has been swept under the carpet.

From the time of *Catalonia* onward, you were sickened by the way the Left intelligentsia fawned on a monster like Stalin—to the extent that

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a jab at these people was apt to crop up in your writing at almost any moment. Well, those Stalin worshipers, or their sons and daughters, have finally been made to give up praising Stalin himself, for the time being at any rate; but the basic mentality is still visible everywhere, and so are the ploys that you so consistently uncovered in your immediately postwar writings like "Politics and the English Language."

Not only have Communist polemics remained very much as you foresaw they would, but the essential nature of Communism, its wellspring in the Kremlin, has remained monolithically similar. In *1984* you described a Europe engaged in a permanent armed struggle between power blocs; that vision has come true, not in terms of an all-out war with each side throwing at the other its entire stock of armaments, but in terms of psychology and atmosphere. There is virtually always fighting going on in some part of the globe, and most of it is traceable to the hostility between the Communist and capitalist (or "free") worlds. I put quotation marks around *free*, but I don't wish to suggest that the word is altogether without reality; we are freer than they are, at any rate, and we don't shut people who criticize our system up in lunatic asylums with doctors to make them ill instead of well—a refinement of cruelty even Stalin didn't think of. But of course our society is a lot less free than it would be if the permanent threat could be removed and we could feel secure. At bottom, underneath all the quarrels of this and that faction, the basic problem of the Western democracies is that we are faced with an enemy too powerful to be conquered, and too implacable ever to shake hands and make it up. We can buy ourselves a measure of security only by diverting an enormous proportion of our resources into armaments. Needless to say this causes discontent among the populations, and every few years the "Peace Movement" flares up, as it is doing at this moment. Personally I would not use the word "peace" if what I really meant was "surrender," though I admit that to surrender is one way to get peace, if only the peace of the dungeon and the grave. The Kremlin, of course, tirelessly fosters the "peace" movement in the West, while hastily stamping out any signs of it within its own empire, but I am inclined to think that the movement owes its mass adherence not so much to direct Communist manipulation as to the mere passage of years. Up to the time when you went into your terminal illness and, presumably, ceased to take a great deal of interest in what happened in the world, all the signs were (as you yourself noted) that the Russians were aiming to attack the West. Something—presumably NATO, plus nuclear deterrence—has prevented that attack from being launched, and we have had peace and stability, of a kind, for over thirty-five years. This, of course, is behind the demand for disarmament. There are now people halfway through a normal life span who were not even born when the democracies last had

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to defend themselves against a totalitarian aggressor, and many of them have simply not envisaged the possibility and don't believe it could ever happen—not even when they see it happening to people quite similar to themselves, who happen to live in other parts of the globe. In this ostrich-like attitude they are, of course, influenced by what you called in your essay on Kipling "the one-eyed pacifism of the English"—with reference, as I remember, to the line "making mock of uniforms that guard you while you sleep." This one-eyed pacifism, you would not be surprised to learn, is as evident as ever. An Oxford outfit calling itself "Advertising for Peace" displays a large poster at the exit from the city's main shopping precinct, just where it will catch the eye of worried people who have spent the last half hour counting pennies and looking round for bargains: it reads "Last Year, the Average British Family Spent £16 a Week on Arms." Anyone accustomed to analyzing propaganda will, of course, smell a rat on seeing that phony statistic. What is the "average family"?—father, mother, and 2.5 children? Why not give us a straight statistic, such as the proportion of the GNP that goes to defense? Obviously because this kind of special pleading has more impact on the unreflective passerby.

Even taking that example on its own ground, £16 (about $28.00) a week is just about what I spend on beer. (If this sounds like a lot, take into account the monstrous price of the stuff—sixty or seventy pence a glass—and the fact that my social life takes place in public houses.) When I reflect that my family and I are being protected against the kind of thing that is going on in, say, Poland, and all for the equivalent per week of my beer money, I feel grateful. I think I would give up the beer rather than the protection.

But that kind of sly, round-the-corner argumentation, smuggling suggestions into the reader's mind, is always with us, which leads me to my next heading. The bad taste left in your mouth by the dishonesty of so many people who had the benefits of good education and wide access to information led you into a (sometimes comical) grumbling at intellectuals in general, an insistence that they were more pervious to humbug, more dishonest than the ordinary unthinking person who had no ax to grind. Your later work abounds in comments along the lines of "Only an intellectual would be such a fool as to believe that." As I say, I find these asides comical in the sense that they bring a smile, sometimes an outright laugh; but I wish, because I would like to respect the intelligentsia, that I could deny their truth. Fine and penetrating minds, with a reverence for truth and a willingness to admit past mistakes, do exist now as they did in your day; the trouble now, as then, is with the lumpen intelligentsia, who are familiar enough with ideas to parrot a few slogans. When T. S. Eliot said of Henry James, "He had a mind so fine

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that no ideas could violate it," he was contrasting James with the people whose minds can be taken over by an *idée fixe* to the extent that they could be said, indeed, to have been violated by an idea. Sometimes this idea is political; sometimes it is politico-social; it can even be simply vanity, the writer's idea of himself as a clever, original person who must come up with a new slant. Smarty-boots journalism existed in your time, but it has become a catastrophic flood of rubbish in ours. An example from the *Guardian*, which of recent years has become very much the house magazine of London trendies: on January 6, 1982, Nancy Banks-Smith, one of the high priestesses of this kind of verbal chat-show, began an article:

> The most frightening lines of *Animal Farm* are the last: "The creatures inside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man; but already it was impossible to say which was which." There is no difference between right and wrong, cops and robbers, them and us. And when you corner "the most dangerous man in the world," he turns out to be working for you.

Anyone who can read *Animal Farm*—one of the most plain-speaking books ever written, with a moral that, if anything, is punched home a little too hard—anyone who can read that book and carry away from it the message that "there is no difference between right and wrong," surely deserves the dismissive tone in which you referred to intellectuals and subintellectuals generally.

Moving to the second category—things that have gone in a direction you simply did not foresee—I think the biggest nettle that has to be grasped here is one that confronts everyone whose thinking has, or ever did have, an egalitarian and socialistic tinge. For myself, growing up in an industrial town during the depression years, it was natural for me at twenty to be on the side of the workingman against his employer, the side of labor against capital, because I had seen so much misery and poverty—people living in wretched little houses that did not keep out the winter weather, children growing up with crooked bones because they were not adequately fed, and so on. It was an article of faith with me, as it was with you (and given the evidence we had in front of our eyes, it could hardly have been anything else) that we must take sides in what you called, in "Looking Back on the Spanish War," "the struggle of the gradually awakening common people against the lords of property and their hired liars and bumsuckers." Put like that, there is no other conclusion one *could* come to, and to take sides meant to take sides with the common people. That is the essay in which you fiercely stripped away the side issues and the rhetoric and asked, "Shall the common man be pushed back into the mud, or shall he not?"

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It seemed so simple when that essay was written. But now, forty years later, the issues are sadly blurred; the distinction between mud and solid ground seems to have gotten lost, so that we can hardly tell who is pushing whom, and where. When you wrote the essay, there was a "working class," who on the whole earned low wages, lived in poor housing, had very sketchy education, and had to watch the material rewards of life going to the higher-ups. Well, look at our society now. Who are the people with low incomes? Who are doing without the material comforts and rewards? Who has the poor housing? As for education, such a fog of confusion has come down on it that most people's education nowadays could fairly be described as sketchy, whoever they are.

The Road to Wigan Pier presents an unforgettable picture of the life of a coal miner in the North of England. You show the miner as the caryatid holding up the rest of society; all the rest of us "owe the comparative decency of our lives" to "blackened drudges" far down in the earth. And of course the miner was a splendid diagram for the exploited working class as a whole, because his job was dirty, dangerous, arduous, and (considering what it was) scandalously low-paid. He had a trade union that was supposed to look after his interests, but it does not seem to have been very effective.

Well, look at the miners today. They still do a difficult and arduous job, but their conditions of work have, I am glad to say, changed almost out of recognition. In my youth the miners of North Staffordshire had to walk or bus home covered in coal dust because they did not even have pithead baths, and the homes they went to were shabby and depressing. All that is changed. Nor could one, using any yardstick that applies to wages and salaries as a whole, describe them as underpaid. In short, just as the miner of the 1930s could stand as a type of the exploited work force generally, the miner of the 1980s can stand as a type of the enormous leverage now exerted by organized labor.

Nor is this leverage simply a matter of ensuring adequate rewards for work. The new breed of trade union leader is not like the ones you saw in action and heard speak at meetings. Trade unionism, which grew out of the workingman's desperate need to push away the forces of exploitation, is now seen by many of its exponents as an instrument of radical social change. The larger and more militant unions now see themselves as stepping out in shining armor to challenge the government and, if possible, to use industrial muscle to wrestle it down if it happens to be a government they disapprove of. So the paralyzing power of strike action is brought in to do what the democratic ballot box did not do. The government of Edward Heath was brought down, in 1971, by the hostility of the unions, chiefly that of the coal miners; and that govern-

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ment, whatever one's opinion of it, had been elected by the population at large. As I write, the National Union of Mineworkers has got itself under the leadership of a man who spouts Marxist clichés as copiously as Fidel Castro; he has already announced, halfway through the summer, that in the autumn round of pay bargaining his union intends to make a provocatively large claim, which the government is more or less bound to have to refuse; this will bring on a strike, and—here is the point I want to make—the strike weapon will be used not as a means for getting the miner a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, which is what trade unionism used to be about, but as a political battering ram in the service of the anti-democratic Left. Now, what would you, George Orwell, make of this? Would you say, "The miners forever—the common man right or wrong"? But then, who, nowadays, is the common man? Isn't it the case that highly organized key workers, in a position to bring the economy to a standstill and wreck everybody's hopes, form an aristocracy, in the sense of a power handed on from generation to generation and not answerable to the normal authority of a democratic state?

How clear-cut it all sounds in "Looking Back on the Spanish War"!

> Pétain attributes the fall of France to the common people's "love of pleasure." One sees this in its right perspective if one stops to wonder how much pleasure the ordinary French peasant's or working-man's life would contain compared with Pétain's own. The damned impertinence of these politicians, priests, literary men, and what not who lecture the working-class Socialist for his "materialism"! All that the working man demands is what these others would consider the indispensable minimum without which human life cannot be lived at all. Enough to eat, freedom from the haunting terror of unemployment, the knowledge that your children will get a fair chance, a bath once a day, clean linen reasonably often, a roof that doesn't leak, and short enough working hours to leave you with a little energy when the day is done. Not one of those who preach against "materialism" would consider life livable without these things. And how easily that minimum could be attained if we chose to set our minds to it for only twenty years!

Well, we did set our minds to it for twenty years and more: the standard of living went up faster and faster, people's expectations mounted, and for a long time now it has not been a question of clean linen and a roof that doesn't leak. It has been the car in the garage and the color TV and the annual holiday in the sun and the washing machine and the deep-freeze and the hi-fi and the this and the that until one hardly knows, by now, the dividing line between ordinary self-protection and comfort and a dazed, Gadarene chase across a technicolor dream-landscape devised by the advertising fraternity. Certainly *they* have no intention of letting the ordinary wage earner off the hook. Even at a time of recession it has to be *Consume, spend! consume, spend!*

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consume, spend! or the whole house of cards—slightly grubby cards, by this time—will fall down.

It is a long way from *1984*—oh, certainly a long way from that, even in our present battered state. There are nations living the drab life of shortages and austerity that you envisaged there, but they are to be found in Eastern Europe, which we have no control over anyway.

Some things, then, have developed as you saw them developing; some have changed their nature; some others, and these among the most striking, seem not to have intruded on your attention at all. You saw and hated anti-Semitism; how would you have felt about its all-too-easy metamorphosis into "anti-Zionism," which can be made to look so much more respectable? You saw and hated color prejudice; but in your lifetime England had so small a black-and-brown population that you were probably right in saying, about 1945, that there was no color problem in the country. What would you say now? You would condemn the injustice and violence, of course, but what would be your practical suggestions?

Other matters caught your attention and you made comments on them that are accurate as far as they go, but you do not seem to have foreseen the sheer scale on which they would develop. An obvious case is the feminist movement. You were aware that feminism existed, because there is a lighthearted reference in an early letter to some acquaintance who "thinks that if girls were brought up in exactly the same way as boys they would be able to throw a stone, construct a syllogism, keep a secret, etc." This of course is mildly satirical and doesn't call for an answer. (I don't know about throwing stones, an activity we don't need much more of, but I should have thought that Iris Murdoch, for example, could construct a syllogism as well as most male philosophers, let alone most ordinary men; and it is a rare woman who doesn't have to do her share of keeping secrets.) But from the slight but persistent strain of misogynism that crops up in your work, I would guess that you would have a skeptical reaction to the feminist movement as it exists today. Certainly I would like, as comic relief, to confront you with the lady who (for instance) is so fierce about substituting "person" for "man" that she will not allow the word "fireman" to go unchallenged; it has to be "firefighter," and if you point out that the people employed in fighting fires are in fact men, she says that is because little girls are brainwashed into playing with dolls.

On a more serious level, I think you would have been surprised at the Balkanization of the country which you habitually described as "England." This name has now dropped out almost completely; I sometimes feel, like an inhabitant of Zimbabwe or Tanzania, that I live in a country that has changed its name in my lifetime. The reason is, of course, that

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the Scots, Welsh, and Northern Irish will not submit to hearing the country described as "England" and its customs as "English." I am even expecting any day to hear them start talking about "the British language"—by which, in fact, they ought to mean Welsh. About a decade ago an English critic, resident in America, brought out a book called *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry*, and I can remember the small shock it gave me; I hadn't known there was such a thing as British poetry. I thought that the literature produced in these islands and written in English was English literature, not because everyone who wrote it was English, but because it used the one language and formed part of the one tradition. I also thought that the complexity of this tradition, the fact that Welshmen and Irishmen and Scotsmen did not write like Englishmen, was one of the things that made it interesting and important. This attitude used to be universal. Robert Louis Stevenson, in his discursive autobiographical writings such as *Travels with a Donkey*, refers to himself sometimes as a Scotsman and sometimes as an Englishman, according to which side of his personality and his social conditioning he wishes to emphasize. He would hardly be able to do that today; his fellow Scots would not allow it.

You yourself wrote a short book during the latter part of the war (though for various reasons it was not published until a couple of years after the war ended) called *The English People*. I doubt if any publisher today would let you get away with this title, though it describes the content of the book accurately enough. You had very little experience of the Celtic races within the U.K., and when you generalized it was about the English, and nearly always about those in the southern half of the country. But the new militancy among the aforesaid Celtic races would nowadays ensure that your title would kill the book stone-dead in any bookshop in Edinburgh or Cardiff or Belfast, and no publisher would put up with that. At about the same time, you remarked in one of your London Letters to the *Partisan Review:*

> Attempts are constantly being made in short-lived reviews to revivify the various regional literatures, Scottish, Welsh, Irish and Northern Irish. These movements always have a strong nationalist and separatist tinge, sometimes bitterly anti-English, and will print anything however bad which is politically OK.

Here again is a form of words you wouldn't get away with today: the Scots, Welsh, Irish are "national" literary traditions, not regional. In fact, as the minority nations have shown their backs higher and higher above the tide, various "regional" movements—properly so called, delineated not in terms of nationhood but simply as areas within England—have followed them to the surface, so that we now have an orthodoxy of decentralization and a constant exploitation of everything local, from

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accents to weather. Most of the material on show is, in fact, rubbish; labels like "East Anglian poet" or "Mersey poet" simply provide a stamping ground for people who otherwise wouldn't have the nerve to describe themselves as poets at all. The national literatures are another thing; a deeper recognition of their individuality was overdue, and Dylan Thomas, for instance, was constantly misinterpreted by critics who failed to discern how many features of his work came out of the Welsh temperament and the Welsh attitude toward language; your own essay on Yeats is the least interesting of your critical essays, because it shows no awareness of those qualities in Yeats that were Irish. (Even your account of Joyce, which I like so much, could have done with a little of that awareness.)

Like most swings of the pendulum, the whole thing has now gone too far, at least on its cultural side. It would be good to have your comments, for instance, on the activities of literary critics who are busily trying to unpick the tapestry of English literature into its constituent strands, pulling out those with Scottish, Welsh, or Irish blood and putting them neatly in separate little boxes; one lot grabbing a Welsh cockney like Edward Thomas, whose literary influences and subject matter were alike totally English, another lot kidnapping Smollett or Stevenson, still another running barbed wire around Goldsmith and Wilde—in each case the object being to take them out of the wider context of English literature and pen them up in a stuffy little enclosure of their own nationality. There is, in fact, a flourishing Welsh literature because the Welsh language, unlike any of the others, is still spoken and written by many people; but the Anglo-Welsh literary movement ignores this and tries instead to appropriate G. M. Hopkins or Henry Vaughan.

On that side, the separatist movements continue to deserve the rather impatient tone of your reference to them, quoted above. But on the larger political and social fronts, your instincts were, as usual, very sound. If the U.K. is, as I believe, a multiracial society (as regards its aborigines, I mean, without going into the question of immigration), then we must cooperate to make it work; and if you want people's cooperation, it is a mistake to keep treading on their feelings. In *The English People* you say, simply and matter-of-factly, "Both Scotland and Wales could and should be a good deal more autonomous than they are at present." I believe you would be gratified by the progress that has been made in these matters, though it is not enough, of course, to satisfy the extremists whose chief motive appears to be hatred of England. But already it is impossible to go back to the situation we had in the 1930s, when whole communities in Scotland and Wales were more or less left to rot because they were invisible from Westminster. The Welsh miners, for instance, were for a decade treated even more scurvily than their

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English colleagues, and the basic reason was probably the ingrained feeling among English politicians that they were "different"—a strange, remote race of troglodytes who had specialized habits and spoke with a comical accent. If you treat people like that, they are bound to react against it sooner or later, and the present-day nationalist fanatic is probably the son or grandson of some depression family—except in Ireland, where the roots are deeper and darker.

Decentralization had to come, devolutions of power to Scotland and Wales had to come (I can't touch the Irish problem and don't expect you could either—it is totally insoluble because there are too many Irish who don't *want* it solved), and the new respect for everything regional, which is in fact Europe-wide, is in general to be welcomed. All the same, the Balkanization has some unattractive sides, and I am quite sure you didn't foresee how far it would all go. I am expecting the Bank of England to be renamed the Bank of Britain at any moment, and nobody now writes books with titles like *The English People*. I even know Englishmen who allow themselves, with no apparent sense of outrage, to be referred to as "Brits." (I'd like to see anybody call *you* a Brit.)

I want lastly to touch on a very important strand in your work which stemmed directly from a very important strand in your character: the love of simple pleasures, of green spaces and unpolluted water and quiet individual pursuits like gardening and fishing. No one has written better than you about the sort of pleasures that are, or were, accessible to a person with very little money. I say "or were" because this is one of the ways in which the situation has changed.

During the whole of your lifetime, the great majority of people—in England and Europe, not to look as far as the really poor countries of the earth—did not have enough of the world's material goods. (We come back to that point about a roof that doesn't leak and a change of clothes reasonably often.) The graph of prosperity was rising in your last years, but it did not reach significant heights until after 1950. In your world, people lived simply whether they had any particular wish to do so or not. The average town had not sprawled so far out into the countryside, roads were not choked with traffic, the transistor radio and amplified pop music had not banished quiet from every public place. As a man who instinctively enjoyed country pleasures, who liked such things as sitting by a wood fire, and leaning over a gate watching the behavior of hedgerow animals, you had an uneasy sensation that the modern world was against you, but in those days the opposition was, so to speak, doctrinal. What stood in the way of those pleasures was not that they were hard to come by but that they were disapproved of. If your articles in *Tribune* ever mentioned the beauties of rural nature, earnest Socialists wrote bristling letters complaining that they didn't buy the paper to

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read this kind of sentimental reactionary nonsense. And you evidently felt aware of a quite separate disapproval that seemed to emanate from the centers of power:

> How many a time have I stood watching the toads mating, or a pair of hares having a boxing-match in the young corn, and thought of all the important persons who would stop me enjoying this if they could.

I am not quite sure who these important persons were: it is almost as if you had made a psychological transference to the state of mind of a citizen of a totalitarian country, where quiet, innocent pursuits that have nothing to do with advancing the ideology or bolstering "the Party" are suspect as a matter of course. But surely nobody in the government of Mr. Attlee, or the Conservative opposition of the day, would have felt outraged by your fondness for the countryside.

However, if that slight feeling of persecution helped to motivate you to write "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad," which, unpretentious as it is, I take to be one of the most important of your essays, some good was done. The problem is now different. There are still people who like simple rural pleasures, but nowadays they have to travel farther to get to unfenced woodland or unpolluted rivers; they are ferociously driven off if they try to walk across agricultural land; they can't sit in a quiet pub over a pint of beer because the universal introduction of jukeboxes has made the pubs as noisy as factories. ("The Moon Under Water," which you describe in such simple but glowing terms, may not, as you say, have actually existed at the time; but anything remotely approaching it is now an impossible dream.) Intensive agriculture, which drains the ponds (no more toads), tidies up all marginal land and rips out the hedges (very little wildlife of any kind), and sprays even the roadsides to "clear up the weeds," that is, the common and beautiful wild flowers you knew—intensive agriculture, significantly known nowadays as agribusiness, has put those of us who share your tastes on the defensive to the point where we have to organize, to use words like "conservationist" and "the ecology," to get up lobbies and pressure groups to try to affect legislation. It's all part of the unceasing rearguard action that we have to mount against that world of Too-Much that has replaced the world of Too-Little that you saw about you.

The world of Too-Little also still exists, all too obviously, but its boundaries have been pushed more into the distance. This process has of course been going on since the eighteenth century, and you put your finger on it when you remarked that the real working class of a country like England had black or yellow skins and was a long way away. But the day of strangulation in material abundance—even a trashy material abundance, of junk food and cheap entertainment and industrial waste—

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has come since your time, though you foresaw it clearly enough to devote a whole novel to it, *Coming Up for Air*. We have to wage a more formalized battle against it; but when I look again at "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad," I know that you would have been with us.

> Certainly we ought to be discontented, we ought not simply to find out ways of making the best of a bad job, and yet if we kill all pleasure in the actual process of life, what sort of future are we preparing for ourselves? If a man cannot enjoy the return of spring, why should he be happy in a labour-saving Utopia? What will he do with the leisure that the machine will give him? I have always suspected that if our economic and political problems are ever really solved, life will become simpler instead of more complex, and that the sort of pleasure one gets from finding the first primrose will loom larger than the sort of pleasure one gets from eating an ice to the tune of a Wurlitzer. I think that by retaining one's childhood love of such things as trees, fishes, butterflies and—to return to my first instance—toads, one makes a peaceful and decent future a little more probable, and that by preaching the doctrine that nothing is to be admired except steel and concrete, one merely makes it a little surer that human beings will have no outlet for their surplus energy except in hatred and leader worship.

Yes, you stood against "hatred and leader worship" wherever they appeared. I have tried to indicate areas where your ideas have been borne out by history and areas where they have not; but this is hardly more than a strategy, a diagram that might be useful in setting up a discussion of your work. And my message to you, if you still need messages from among the living, is that the picture is not all black. The things you fought against are all still there, as you knew they would be; but so are a surprising number of the things you fought *for*. You always said—and it is one of the things that marked you off from the out-and-out progressive—that we live among the ruins of a civilization; but the ruins seem to be holding up fairly well. And that, basically, is the word from

Your admirer early and late,

John Wain

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Cher Ami

(for Henri Peyre at eighty)

ROGER SHATTUCK

D'abord une voix
With a stunning countertenor aria
M W F at ten
you held us firm between hypnosis
and hysterics for a nonstop middle-distance
romp through French classic theater
and on the way
most of Western culture.

Des gestes ensuite
A fluid turning to the board and back
with hands as busy and articulate
as a conductor's—
in Harkness 206 we watched a double-breasted
whirling dervish in slow motion
work and pray tirelessly to start
the flow
of our molasses minds.

Et le tableau noir
A few numbered points
gradually disappeared
behind a galaxy of names and terms
scrawled in every dwindling space—
the first we'd ever heard (in 1946)
of Dylan Thomas, existentialism,
Eisenstein, Céline.
We squinted at your blackboard universe
fearing and hoping there was more beyond
invisible to our still naked eyes.

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Deux genres portés à la perfection

On two major counts you've always been unbeatable.
Those lavish introductions of visiting lecturers
entrance the audience and usually
dumbfound the unsuspecting speaker.
André Breton I remember needed a few moments
to pull his leonine self together.

Your handwritten letters of recommendation
eloquent and largely indecipherable
set our standard of civilized evaluation
and always mention the neglected essentials—
first-class cook . . .
daughter of the great jazz pianist . . .
a bit lacking in sense of humor . . .
his wife is even more charming and intelligent . . .

Et l'homme même

Politics, the stage
and the profit motive
have hatched no more or meaner vices
than walk abroad in higher education.
What is your talisman?
The day on High Street
I playfully addressed you
as *cher maître*
your laugh was gentle, your words firm.
Non, non, mon ami. Jamais cela. Pas pour moi.
May you keep on whirling
cher ami
to show us all true north
and educate our children's
grandchildren.

✪ ROGER SHATTUCK is Commonwealth Professor of French at the University of Virginia. His publications include *Half Tame*, a book of poems, and *The Forbidden Experiment: The Story of the Wild Boy of Aveyron.*

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Walk

(for Janet)

BARON WORMSER

Fond of vague, local expeditions, we
  Decide to go for a walk.
The elms are lifeless. The clouds are magenta.
    We talk
  About the prospects for disarmament,
My back pains, how in Maine each spring is "late."
    None of this
    Precipitates any debate
On the part of the woodpeckers or frost-spilled walls
  Or the hillside's seasonal waterfalls.
After awhile our voices have had enough of themselves,
    We listen
  And in our aimless footsteps detect something else,
    Something lulling and May-sweet.
    We try to repeat ourselves but fail.
The gloss of description or the extraction of a moral
    Won't do.
  Notions of grandeur and humility pale.
    We sense the vacant truth:
      Peace is a motion.
      We head back home
Through the beech grove and unfurling ferns.
      On the path
      Between silence and talk
      We are learning to walk.

✪ BARON WORMSER's first collection of poems, *The White Words*, will be published by Houghton Mifflin in January 1983.

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William James, Author

JACQUES BARZUN

AN ACADEMIC MAN SITUATED AS WILLIAM JAMES WAS for most of his life may be said to carry on three professions at the same time: resident teacher, ambulant lecturer, and writer. It is only habit that makes us think they go well together. A fourth activity—science, scholarship—feeds the other three. But between these, whatever his genius bids a man set forth to the world in books is perpetually cramped. For there is nothing more inimical to writing than talking. The two are indeed rooted in the same impulse—to express, to explain—but one mode of communication disables the mind for the other. To put it concretely, after a day of classroom haranguing, repeating, amplifying for students, the desire to face a blank sheet of paper—never a rosy encounter—is nonexistent. It takes a heroic effort of will to reinstate oneself into the world of one's earlier meditations, lure them out, and recompose them in silent words. And no sooner has a first draft of eight or ten pages been produced than it must be put away and the next day's preparation for class begun. Besides, a university imposes the endurance test of committee work, which in itself enfeebles the mind and entails more writing.

These conditions absolutely preclude the continuous concentration, the obsession with a subject, that is necessary for writing "a work" in the honorific sense of the term. "Give me twelve hours of work on *one* occupation for happiness," cried out James in mid-career. In the last century and this, the fact that professional writing in this country, other than a certain kind of fiction, fails to ensure a livelihood has doubtless deprived the world of many fine and useful books. Authors without private means have written less than they might and done all their work piecemeal: Emerson never wrote a book. In our day, the academic world has invented the one-year shelter in some far place, where a small herd of the supposedly gravid can give birth, but the device is too artificial to suit every temper, and from William James to Lionel Trilling the norm

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has been for literary genius to squeeze out its products through the meshes of continual interruption in some university setting.

That is the main reason why the *Principles of Psychology* took twelve years to write and *Matthew Arnold* nine. The anxiety, too, of work planned but unpursued day after day is galling; it accounts for much of James's nervous irritability and physical symptoms; they were the same, in cause and effect, as when in youth he was starving for the sense of accomplishment. Things being so, it is obvious how cruel and stupid the modern academic policy of "publish or perish" actually is. It fosters nothing but the neglect of teaching and the dilution of scholarship.

That James taught for half of his sixty-eight years and yet managed to leave a body of work so massive and so perfected is something of a miracle. For he has left a legacy to literature, as well as to science and philosophy. As a prose writer, William James ranks with the other American masters—Emerson, Melville, Mark Twain, and Henry James—and he has few or no equals in the language when compared with his peers in philosophy or science.

There is of course no obligation to be both a thinker and a great writer; but when one compares James with others of his kind and rank, one is tempted to wonder whether in the world's opinion lucidity and true art may not be a handicap. Clarity exposes every joint of the structure and leaves no difficulties for textual critics to build a career upon. Note how Kant and Hegel have given employment by their ambiguities, how Marx has generated flourishing schools by being obscure and confused, how Stendhal's secretive journals and letters maintain an industry, how even Wagner's lucubrations have lured good minds to tax their strength in the effort to make him a thinker. Nobody could make a name in this fashion by setting up as a professional clarifier of the lucid—of Descartes, Berkeley or Schopenhauer, Berlioz, Diderot, or James. More than ever today, when Interpretation (rebaptized "hermeneutics," as if to make my point) is rampant, there is wisdom in being alluring yet inaccessible.

For his own good or ill, James's purpose was just the opposite. He felt the moral obligation to be intelligible: "to say a thing in one sentence as straight as it can be made, and then to drop it forever." He hated "oozy writing" or what Darwin envied Spencer for, "the art of wriggling." One must remember that James believed in the worth of philosophy, not as a pastime for keen wits, but as the answer to a permanent need of mankind; "the philosophy which is so important in each of us is not a technical matter"; so philosophical utterance must be as ecumenical as religion. On this point he could have invoked the example of Plato and Aristotle, both of whom wrote popular philosophy in dialogue form, though only the former's survives.

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One element in such survival is style, and the mark of style is individuality in expressiveness. A paragraph by William James can hardly be mistaken for one by anybody else. In an early book review he unwittingly defined his aim: "As the opinions of average men are swayed more by examples and types than by mere reasons, so a personality as accomplished as Mr. Morley's cannot fail by its mere attractiveness to influence all who come within its reach and inspire them with a certain friendliness toward the faith that animates it. But to be thus widely effective a man must not be a specialist. Mr. John Mill, weighty and many-sided as he is, is yet deficient in the aesthetic direction, and the same is true of M. Littré in France. Their lances lack that final tipping with light that made Voltaire's so irresistible. What Henry IV's soldiers followed was his white plume; and that imponderable superfluity, grace, in some shape, seems one factor without which no awakening of men's sympathies on a large scale can take place."

Those words give a fair sample of James's style at thirty—a little stiff and self-conscious as yet, but already "tipped with light." Perry, the professional philosopher who was James's respectful biographer, records with some amazement: "In spite of his intermittent resolves to be technical, he could never be satisfied with any product of his pen which was not readable." One should add: not simply readable but *exhaustive*, in the sense of conveying a whole meaning in its intended order and atmosphere. In James—as sampling him has shown—the structure is often complex, but the sinuous movement and apt coloring make all clear. The substance is rich in illustrations—cases, historical facts, personal experiences, images and analogies, sometimes dialogue to dramatize an opponent's view—and the tone blends the formal with the colloquial. These features make up a rhetoric of persuasion; it offers perceptions and positions without verbal juggling and propels the argument by affirmation without dogmatism. The effect is of high-powered conversation in which we hear, agreeably, a voice.

Thus a passage written forty years after the book review: "Place yourself at the centre of a man's philosophic vision and you understand at once all the different things it makes him write or say. But keep outside, use your post-mortem method, try to build the philosophy out of simple phrases, taking first one and then another in seeking to make them fit and of course you fail. You crawl over the thing like a myopic ant over a building, tumbling into every microscopic crack or fissure, finding nothing but inconsistencies, and never suspecting that a centre exists."

This observation should be enough to settle the issue of technical writing in subjects involving the shape of the mind as much as its contents. A lady reader was shocked by James's style because of its "want of academic dignity," and his dear friend Peirce deplored his

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"racy writing" as "wrong" for philosophy. But F. C. S. Schiller, James's defender at Oxford, had the wiser view of James's way: "It is absolutely the right way—for you . . . and its appeal is world-wide. Unfortunately, there are others who must be dealt with differently. And fortunately we too are capable of other methods. Dewey's primary appeal is to those who like their philosophy difficult and technical and will respect nothing that is not obscure. Mine is to the dialecticians and the logic-choppers and the controversialists. . . . My duty is to show them that we can beat them at their own despicable game."

James achieved ecumenical expression, as others have done, by tireless revision and rewriting. A wording that really exhausts the author's intention comes only from effort that exhausts the author too. Taking this truth for granted and acting on it, James was surprised to find that whereas in English he could in one day produce at most twenty-five 8 × 10 pages in large longhand, he could write forty in French. The reason, of course, was that in a foreign tongue the range of locutions at one's command is limited, which in turn limits self-criticism: one perforce uses the word that presents itself, and that part of meaning which resides in style remains untapped.

In reading James extensively one comes to distinguish several shadings in his one style. There is the lively-descriptive, which suits the factual cargo of his work in psychology, his scientific papers, and his book reviews; the eloquent-evocative heard in his public addresses; the warmly argumentative of the philosophical essays; and that of the whole man thinking in all possible keys—the style of his letters. Though the intellectual energy never flags, the degree of warmth varies. In reviewing an opponent of his own theory of the emotions, James sounds as uninvolved as a third party. In dealing with the misrepresentations of pragmatism, his good-natured vehemence is that of a friend with nothing to hide. Among the memorial tributes, Emerson is treated with the detachment of one already speaking for posterity; Davidson with the attachment of a brother-philosopher and friend. But James can also be severe when the manner of an opponent or a public attitude exceeds the bounds of indulgent attention.

A critic once asked, "May one say that Henry Jr.'s style was an elaboration of his father's and William's a simplification?" I think not. In all three there is a mastery of words and a love of exaggeration, but except for rare unintended echoes, the likeness stops there. So characteristic and so purposive were their modes of expression that one must say rather, "three men, three styles." Besides, simplification is a relative term. A fault-finding critic could show that William's prose was far from simple. In it are as many French and German words as people object to in Henry Jr.'s—it was a habit of the time to use whatever seemed *le mot*

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juste. In William, the Latin terms of scholastic logic and philosophy also abound—words and phrases now opaque to a generation neither scholastic nor Latinate. Add that his syntax is much more complex than ours of the 1980s and you might argue that his lucidity is—or rather, has become—discontinuous. That it survives unimpaired in reading is due to the rhythmical force that thoughts perfectly embodied will achieve regardless of diction. Shakespeare is understood even when he cannot be parsed. It comes as no surprise that Graham Wallas thought James could have been a great poet.

For it is by imagery as well that James makes the abstruse easily grasped. Not that he argues by analogy or metaphor; he only illustrates, and at the most telling moment. Among his many original phrases, some curiously anticipate images that have independently become our own. He speaks of the senses as "tuned receivers"; he uses "*quanta*" for the incoming "drops" of experience; in describing a theory of creation he sums it up as "a mere resistless bang" (we say "the big bang theory"); elsewhere he sees "the whole universe in its different spans and wavelengths." In another realm, he warns against desiring a "pleasure economy," meaning what we mean by a consumer economy. All these are ways by which his concepts become concretes.

One influence that encouraged James to use imagery and the conversational tone was the lecturing to which he was compelled. As a man of honor he did not simply write an essay and read it aloud more or less audibly: he prepared a lecture. More speakers should remember that the word means a piece intelligible by ear. Writing a lecture demands a special rhetoric that could be learned from James's practice. Consider: "This sense of deeper significance is not confined to rational propositions. Single words and conjunctions of words, effects of light on land and sea, odors and musical sounds, all bring it when the mind is tuned aright. Most of us can remember the strangely moving power of passages in certain poems read when we were young, irrational doorways as they were, through which the mystery of fact, the wildness and the pang of life, stole into our hearts and thrilled them. The words have now perhaps become mere polished surfaces for us; but lyric poetry and music are alive and significant only in proportion as they fetch these vague vistas of a life continuous with our own, beckoning and inviting, yet ever eluding our pursuit."

In these lines, every word and phrase is speakable without stumble or ambiguity, and the rhythms follow the contour of the thought. Note the "special rhetoric": each subject is announced first, the modifiers come after. In speaker's prose one does not begin with some unattached idea whose linking and direction will appear only later. In written prose no such caution is needed. James could have inverted clauses: "When

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the mind is tuned aright, single words, etc." / "By now perhaps, the words have become . . . " / "Only in proportion as they fetch these vague vistas. . . ." This "periodic" order of words creates pleasant suspense for the reader but distracts the listener.

Again, the speaker is not afraid to repeat: ". . . words and conjunctions of words"; not "words and their conjunctions." Finally, the lecturer falls naturally into a You-and-I relation, which he maintains by a series of: "You might suppose / I do not mean . . . / Most of us can remember . . . " and the like—platform courtesies, breathing spells for the listening mind.

Whether in spoken or printed prose, the forward movement that makes it attractive comes from the author's offering his thought not as made but as being made. In possessing that quality, James's style is the perfect mirror of his philosophy, where "what really *exists* is not things made but things in the making." And as "philosophy is only man thinking," so the great art of writing is to represent matured conceptions as if they were being thought, minted fresh as the eye runs along the lines. Obviously, any genius shows this power at its freest in his correspondence. James was no exception. He is one of America's very few letter writers of the first rank, and he can even take his place beside Byron, Keats, and Flaubert. The test for them all is whether every sample gives a self-portrait of greatness, drawn without reserve or premeditation, while also limning the recipient. When recording his thoughts in these spontaneous works of art, James is a magnifier and dramatist like those two other masters of the private message, Shaw and Berlioz. In all three, the verbal exuberance serves to make emotion an object in the round, or again to create humor, or to signal irony, at every turn revigorating perception.

With such lavish resources fully exploited, it may seem paradoxical that James was so profoundly misunderstood, not so much by the public as by professional minds. It was the aesthetician Leo Stein who pointed out why James's "vivid, beautiful prose" may be easy to read and hard to understand: "One feels its richness and ignores its precision." The precision resides in each statement as a whole and the whole depicts an unhabitual grouping of ideas or facts. As Stein puts it, this "maintained contact with life" is a cause of his being "difficult"—doubly so, one might add, because the easy quality of the prose does not brace one for a struggle.

It is not the sense of the words that is refused entrance to the mind, but the implied summons to reorganize all one's familiar ideas. The range of observation, of associations, of learning, of original reflection, of imaginative excursion that James packs into a paragraph is no doubt

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enchanting at the time of its reception, but for some the retrospect is bewilderment. Thus C. S. Peirce, Shadworth Hodgson, and others often could not take in some of James's arguments. We saw how such a simple, straightforward, carefully qualified statement as "The Will to Believe" was misunderstood (like *Pragmatism* later) by some of the best minds in the business of thinking. This recurrent "mishearing" puzzled James and made him look for an explanation. He did not ask for agreement, but for a meeting of minds: "I cry to Heaven to tell me of what insane root my 'leading contemporaries' have eaten that they are so smitten with blindness as to the meaning of printed texts. Or are we others absolutely incapable of making our meaning clear? I imagine there is neither insane root nor unclear writing, but that in these matters each man writes from out of a field of consciousness of which the bogey in the background is the chief object. Your bogey is superstition; my bogey is desiccation; and each, for his contrast-effect, clutches at any text that can be used to represent the enemy." For the same reason, no doubt, artists, looking at each other's work, cannot conceive how it is possible to paint, or compose, "that way."

Some interpreters expectably concluded that their failure to follow was due to defects in James's logic, especially since he said that philosophical systems were at bottom visions, chosen not for logical but for aesthetic reasons. But he also said that "logic has an imperishable use in human life [though] it is not to make us acquainted with the essential nature of reality." He himself exhibited that "imperishable use" on every page. Let any doubter turn back to the endless analyses of rival theories in the *Psychology*; to the continuous dazzling explication of others' errors in *The Meaning of Truth*, to the thirty-five pages "On Some Hegelisms," published in *Mind* in April 1882 and in which classical logic serves as a razor to cut the Hegelian to ribbons; and finally to the letters again, where James fences like a D'Artagnan with his famous and formidable critics. There are also meditations in which James argues ruthlessly—with himself.

And as he thought and wrote, so he fashioned his books. These were not mere collections of essays and lectures with a sanguine preface hoping that unity would emerge. They were designed. He rewrote, modified opinion and expression, and cemented the parts, craftsmanlike.

All the while, James knew better than his peers that logic is not an instrument for advancing thought, but one for exposition and partial verification—one might say it is disemboweled psychology. When James discussed the ladder of faith usable in situations where knowledge is wanting, he said plain and loud: "Not one step in this process is logical." Thus the charge of loose thinking is itself loose talking and inspires the Shakespearean comment:

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What we oft do best
By sick interpreters . . . is not ours
Or not allowed.

This does not mean that James's writings form a seamless web. Gaps and contradictions can be found, some caused by inattention, some by conflicts unresolved. In that regard they resemble the writings of every thinker without exception. Plato is a nest of contradictions, and if the geometrical Spinoza can be criticized for inconsistency about the meaning of truth after 350 years, or the mathematical logician Whitehead is challenged as philosopher on one point after another through 700 pages of celebratory essays, then others too must be allowed slips of the mind and pen.

The real handicap one notes in James as a writer of philosophy is his irrepressible humor. He shares with Swift, Lamb, Samuel Butler, Shaw, Chesterton, and Mark Twain the disadvantage of having used yet one more rhetorical means which, though legitimate in itself and generally pleasing, somehow distracts all but the fittest readers. Sober people seize on it as an opportunity to escape from the serious thought just preceding and thus miss the seriousness in the next, the humorous one. The great humorists always run the risk of not being taken thoughtfully, while the normal men of ideas, faithful to solemnity, invariably are.

With all his limitations of temperament and circumstance, James knew what he was about. He gauged accurately the difference between his qualified affirmations and the imposing certitudes he was attacking. "I am no lover of disorder, but fear to lose the truth by the pretension to possess it wholly." He distrusted bigness in most of the philosophic models available, because—as an English writer put it—"in philosophy and the arts a spacious display creates an illusion of substance." James could have cited as proof the many systems he had studied in the course of acquiring his vast erudition. Superior intellectual honesty (the twin of modesty) explains his long refusal to build a system of his own. When in the last year of his life he undertook a review of his maturest thought, but knew he might not live to finish it, he left instructions that it be called not "The philosophy of ———" anything, but "A beginning of an introduction to philosophy." And it, too, is literature.

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Album of Mr. Cohen

STANLEY KAUFFMANN

I

HE WAS MY WIFE'S FATHER, and he became, in many ways, mine. He was about fifty when I met him in September of 1938, with an iron-gray brush moustache and short iron-gray hair. He was only a bit taller than I, and he sometimes limped on his right leg. I never found out why. Through the years I asked him a few times, and he always shrugged it off.

I've never known anyone who looked so clean so easily. He had little round cheeks and they shone, but his face was not fat. Until the day he hanged himself thirty-four years later, he never grew wrinkled. It was one of his passions to keep lean. He exercised his body with tennis and gym as long as he could, just as he exercised his mind.

To me, coming from my home, he seemed wealthy, though he was only comfortable. What struck me was the combination of wealth and rigor. He was a businessman who lived and prospered among businessmen, but he insisted on several rigors, genuine and vain. He insisted on his thrice-weekly tennis, steam room, massage; on his concert going, theater, lectures. He read addictedly. He loved to read; in a way he lived by reading. But he also liked his reputation as a bookworm, particularly among his business acquaintances, just as he liked his reputation for physical trim.

He had been a Socialist as a youth and young man, like many immigrants of his generation, and now his means of keeping faith the best way he could was to be rigorous, not to grow flabby, not to grow dull. He was a firm, almost angry atheist. He was Jewish, of course: he liked being Jewish, he liked being a member of historical suffering, communal warmth. But religion, Jewish or other, was nothing to him. Of all the books I urged on him through the years, the one he would not touch was the Bible.

The Cohens' apartment had a big living room which they used only

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when they had company. We usually sat in a smaller, friendlier room. Mr. Cohen had an easy chair at one side of a large window, up against a bookcase which, among the books, held a radio. During the Second World War, he milked that radio for news. When the long siege of Leningrad started in September 1941, he wanted to live on the rations that he heard the people of Leningrad were subsisting on; his family quickly overwhelmed him. But in one matter he was stubborn; he told them he would leave if they changed it. In his easy chair was one broken spring: it hadn't pierced the fabric, but it made the seat uncomfortable. He refused to have the spring repaired, or to get a new chair, until the siege of Leningrad was lifted. I happened not to be there when the news came, on a day in January 1944, but Laura told me that he shouted.

Laura had talked about him for the two months that I knew her at a summer theater before I met him. By the time he and I met, Mr. Cohen already had a light around him. It did not dim.

I needed to meet him when I did. I had been a member of a repertory company for seven years and had put faith in its director, who was Mr. Cohen's age. That faith was shaking, badly, and I knew enough about myself to realize that I needed an older man as model and antagonist. Mr. Cohen liked me from the start. My aims were different from anything he had ever wanted, still I reminded him of his younger self, a kind of self he wanted to see in the world.

Their home was in East Orange, a half-hour train ride west of New York, a plump apartment. Mine was in Manhattan with my family, in a lesser apartment. Laura and I didn't marry until February of 1943, four and a half years after I first met Mr. Cohen. For four and a half years, except summers, I spent virtually every weekend in their apartment, with my more immediate father.

II

He liked to talk to me about his beginnings. It's always something of a boast to talk about poor beginnings; it was that but more than that with Mr. Cohen. He wanted to preserve history. I learned later that this remembering was relatively new with him and that he did it more with me than with Laura or her older sister. I felt that he was passing on history as legacy.

He had been born in a small house with a dirt floor in Bialystok, in Poland. I knew many immigrant stories, but I never quite recovered from that dirt floor. My own family, two and three generations back, had been immigrants, but from Germany and what was then called Bohemia; dirt floors were not part of our legend. Sometimes when I saw Mr. Cohen selecting a tie or putting his tennis racket in its press, I thought of that

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dirt floor. Sometimes today, when I look at Laura, I think that her father was born in a house with a dirt floor. I treasure it as a sentimental fact under the sentimental lies about America.

His family had emigrated when he was seven, to the lower East Side of New York. He had gone to work at the age of eleven in a garment factory, men's clothing, sixty hours a week. "That wasn't any kind of exceptional hours then. And remember, it was for two and a half dollars a week." I asked him whether he had been a tailor. "Nah," he said dismissively, "tailoring is a skilled job. I was a boy. I was a basting-puller. Before they sewed the seams finally, they basted with white thread, and after the garment was finished, this thread must be removed. They used to have women and boys do this."

He did it for four years. "Then they wouldn't give me a raise so I went to another place where I had a job preparing pieces for the cutters. Same hours. But four dollars a week."

One of the cutters in that factory had taken an interest in the boy, had recognized qualities in him, had fed him books, brought him to Socialist meetings. The boy couldn't afford the dues, so he swept out the meeting hall. He heard Charles Edward Russell and Eugene Debs.

By the time he was seventeen he was full-grown and had the body to model men's clothes. He was allowed to accompany salesmen on trips. When he was eighteen, he was allowed to make a selling trip on his own. He stayed awake all night on the train because he was afraid he would miss Pittsburgh.

He played baseball. It must have been some sort of semi-pro team because they had uniforms. I vaguely remember a photo in which the players, as in all photos of early baseball teams, looked like graceful poets in fancy dress. He boxed at a neighborhood settlement house and won the club middleweight title. He had learned boxing in self-defense. Against anti-Semites? I asked. "Also against Jews," he said.

And he read. He never finished grammar school, but he never stopped reading. The older man, the cutter, had guided him to Socialist literature and to the Russian novelists, to Shakespeare. He read them all before he was twenty and kept going. As bits of money stuck to him, he began going to the theater. He prided himself on having spotted subsequently famous actors when they were young. But the only great moment for him in the theater, really tremendous, he said, was John Barrymore's Hamlet. When it was over, he had found himself on his feet shouting. I thought of it when Laura told me how he had reacted to the Leningrad news.

He was part of a great story of its time, the immigration of Jews from eastern Europe, but his life was unique. In his early twenties he had married, a neighborhood girl. It was a family joke that Mrs. Cohen had

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received two proposals in the same week: she had a choice between him and another neighborhood boy, a radio operator who became the president of a huge radio network and the world's biggest radio manufacturer, a famous multimillionaire. She had chosen the commission salesman for men's clothing, and she had clung to him through his peculiarities. After their first child was born, Laura's older sister, Mr. Cohen used to work furiously for six months, earn enough in commissions to support his family for an additional six months, then spend the next half year reading every day in the main library at Forty-second Street.

By this time he was no longer active in Socialism, though he attended occasional meetings and he voted Socialist; still he was trying to keep a faith, some kind of demanding faith, to make some kind of difference in his life. He investigated the possibility of going to medical school six months a year, but no school would have him on that basis even if he had been able to pass the entrance exams without a high school diploma. So he read in the library half a year for four years, letting one book lead him to another, until Laura was born. Then the garment selling dwindled, just as he needed money. He went into the dry-cleaning business. He ran a fair-sized plant in Newark that did the cleaning for about forty retail shops. He was still running the plant when I met him.

He was a one-third partner in the business. His other partners were his brother-in-law and a university law professor, but they had nothing to do with the daily management. He was tired of the work. He had been doing it for almost twenty years, and he had long ago got all the satisfaction that was possible from taking over a shoddy plant and making it efficient, from building up the business, from improving the workers' conditions. For the last ten years it had been more or less routine, and he wanted to leave.

He didn't want to stop working. He wanted another kind of work, socially useful, he didn't know what. He was speculating about possibilities, ways to use himself. He was thinking about these things when we met.

III

His first name was Harry, but I always called him Mr. Cohen or, at the most familiar, Mr. C. I had begun with Mr. Cohen, of course, and never wanted to change it. We both liked the formality as a little joke but also as a seriousness. It brought us closer, it fixed us closer. It became so customary that others stopped remarking on it. Even Mrs. Cohen, when she spoke about him to me, called him Mr. Cohen, which she never did with her other son-in-law when he came along.

She was short, tubby, pleasant, peripheral. She had once been quite

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pretty but had never been less than worshipful of Mr. Cohen, though they had their quarrels. She wasn't concerned with the matters that concerned him and me and Laura, nor with his physical regimen. She saw her husband as a wonderful brainy handsome eccentric, her superior in many ways. He, I thought, was reconciled to the role. I learned later that he was more than reconciled.

What I remember best between him and me are our talks. They formed the body of our union. Usually on Sundays, morning or afternoons or both. He would sit in his easy chair, and I would sit in a wing chair facing him, the wide window between us looking out over the suburban rooftops, and we would talk. Sometimes Laura was on the window seat between us, often not. Through the years he and I were in many places together, city and country, we had many meals and walks, but when I think of Mr. Cohen and me at our best, at our most important to each other, we are facing each other in those chairs, the window between us, talking. Sometimes we listened to a baseball game (we never actually went to a game together, as it happened), but mostly it was talk.

I suppose we must have talked about what was happening in the world, about what we had read and were reading, about the repertory company that I was in and that Laura wanted to join, about the writing I might do. But what stands out is what he told me about himself and his past. He had done extraordinary things, and he was aware of them. His early troubles were a considerable part of the talk, but there was much more. For instance, some years earlier he had played tennis every Saturday in a Newark park and had noticed an adolescent black girl who showed talent on the court. He had coached and encouraged and advised her, and she was now a national champion. For instance, when the workers in his cleaning plant had gone on strike some years before, his two partners had refused to negotiate for higher wages, so he had taken a union sign and joined the picket line around his own plant until his partners relented. For a more recent instance, a few years later the union had refused to let him discharge an incompetent worker, so he had gone on strike alone, had picketed the plant alone, until the other workers, worried about the business, had petitioned the union to let him replace the incompetent man.

Some of these stories he told more than once through the decades, but they never bored me. They took on the quality of family ballads. What was strongest for me through it all was an image of struggle, a boy working his way up from nothing into enlightenment, determined to cling to the idea of enlightenment even as the world pressed in on him, a man who, in an environment that hated distinction, clung to his difference without losing the friendship of people around him. He had forged

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an ethics, intellectual and humane, in the narrowed space that the traffic of living had granted him. In some ways I wanted to be like him. In almost all ways I admired him.

One "window" remark, because of what happened at the end, is impossible to forget. As the facts about Hitler came clearer around 1940, he said to me once, quite calmly, "No matter what will be, here's one Jew they'll never get in a concentration camp." The remark had the doubleness of much of what he said: its quality and his awareness of its quality. I believed him.

Thick roast beef at the table on Sundays, and mountainous apple pies. The Cohen family joke, not too far from the truth, was that they fattened me up on weekends for the week. Good cigars, better than I had dreamed of, and Mr. Cohen made sure that I took home a box once in a while. One of the signs of my own later growth, of discoveries that I was eager to make though I knew I was paying a price, was that his cigars were not the best, just as I later discovered that the sauterne of which he was so proud was not really to be drunk with beef.

Breakfasts were lordly. I slept in what would have been the maid's room if their maid had lived in, next to the kitchen, and I could hear him fussing on Sunday mornings. He was always the first one up. I thought he made a little extra noise so that I would join him, though he always managed to look surprised when I came out, always raised his eyebrows high over his black-rimmed glasses as he sat in the breakfast nook in his bathrobe and slippers, the Sunday paper before him. "My dear sir," he would say with straight-faced punctilio, "would you be so kind as to join me in some breakfast?"

Every morning the milkman left a quart of milk and a quart of heavy cream. Of course it disproves nothing about what science has discovered since, but Mr. Cohen had heavy cream on his cereal every morning in all the years I knew him and often had bacon and eggs as well, and when he was seventy-four, his doctor had to order him to stop playing tennis three times a week.

I loved the way I was living, weekends with Laura and with him, the rest of the week working in Manhattan where I would also see Laura in the evenings. Sometimes she and I would be invited away for weekends; summers after I left the repertory company, if I could scrape up the money, she and I would vacation together on farms for a few weeks, even a month; but for most of four and a half years, it was five days in New York and two days in East Orange. I felt that every week I was touching a source, getting a reminder, jousting with an adversary-teacher who kept me mettlesome.

He spoke with a touch of an accent, naturally, which he knew and sometimes joked about, as in the breakfast invitations, by being over-

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precise, pseudo-British. Some words he could never master. When he played bridge, he always said, "Trumpf." When his grandsons arrived, they went to "Darthmouth." Quite apart from his small accent, he used certain phrases like mottoes. When anyone tried to interfere with another's independence or when someone made a decision that displeased others, he would say, "All I can say is, let everyone go to hell his own way." When there was newspaper publicity over nonsense, he would say, "Explain to me the contribution of such a thing. What does it contribute?" When there was ghastly news, personal or public, or when he was just feeling low, he would nod grimly and say, "What's it all about? Yes, sir. What's it all about?"

One day, a few years after we met, something happened that I can hardly believe even now, except that I know it happened because I sometimes nudged him about it later. He used to tease me about my lack of athletic skills—I had once tried tennis with him, and after ten minutes he had turned his back on me and walked off the court—but it was almost with pride, as if the fact that I was not an athlete showed something weightily preoccupied in me. One day, I don't remember how we got into it, we were sitting in our usual chairs and the subject of strength came up, and it went to the point where he wanted to compare our strengths, his and mine. He said he thought he could outwrestle me. I made a joke about not wanting to hurt an old man. He said, "All right, my dear sir, let's see," and we took off our jackets and actually wrestled, there in that little sitting room, on the carpet. He was wiry, but I was almost his weight and I was almost thirty years younger. We grunted around—I liked the feel of his body—straining and pulling goodnaturedly but really trying. Laura watched for a while, increasingly disgusted with our silliness, then walked out of the room. At last I managed to get him on his back and pin his shoulders. I crowed and let him up. He laughed and blushed and made some remark about letting me win, about wanting to try me out. But he had tried to beat me. In fact, that was the last physical contest I was ever in. Even then, I was enough of an amateur psychologist to understand why it may have happened, but that the two of us, the talkers, should have done it is one of those events of the past I need to keep verifying in my mind.

A few weeks later—it may not have been cause and effect, still it was only a few weeks later—he gave me five hundred dollars with which to write my first novel. I had been doing some one-act plays, some other scattered writing, to find pocket money while I still lived with my parents: I had not yet left the repertory company, was rehearsing at night and playing Friday nights and Saturday matinees. (I went out to East Orange after the matinee.) I had never openly said to Mr. Cohen that if I could find enough money to cover expenses for six months, I'd like to try

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a novel, but he had pieced together my feelings, and one day he suddenly handed me a check.

I wrote the book within the six months, and the first publisher to whom I sent it accepted it in twenty-four hours. I telephoned Mr. Cohen at his plant to tell him the news, and I made a little joke about it, perhaps something like the crowing after we had wrestled. He flared up angrily, said he was in the middle of a busy day, congratulated me sharply, and hung up. It took him a week to get over his irritation, then we celebrated my news.

Early in 1943 I thought I was going to be drafted into the army. I had twice been deferred because of an operation done in 1939, but when I got a third call, I thought I would be taken. (I wasn't: they deferred me again.) Laura and I wanted to be married before I left. After our four and a half years, a big ceremony seemed comic to us, so we got our blood tests, and twenty-four hours later—twenty-three and a half, to be exact, the marriage has never been precisely legal—we were married in the Municipal Building in Manhattan by the deputy city clerk. The room had brown linoleum, a lectern, a potted palm. The clerk put down his lighted cigar when we walked in, performed the ceremony, picked up his cigar and didn't even have to relight it. Three parents and the one living grandparent attended, two witnesses and a friend. Mrs. Cohen had a cold and couldn't come. Mr. Cohen was there, grumbling. He wanted us to marry, but he didn't understand why he had to travel all the way in from East Orange on a freezing February day merely to see the legal acknowledgment of something he had long accepted.

We all went out for drinks. I made a joke as we crossed the icy street, something about a bad time to break my leg, and Mr. Cohen shook his head as if buzzed by a hornet. "Always with the jokes." The wedding might be mere formality, but it was a serious day. With the drinks, he recovered his poise. He made one of the toasts—the warmest. Then he shook hands all around, kissed Laura, and left the party.

I was glad to be married, but I knew I would miss the weekends. Like most great gains, the marriage brought some loss.

IV

I saw him, of course, but not as often, not ritually, not even as regularly as once a month. In the next few years he grew more and more impatient with his work, talked more and more about getting into something that made "more of a contribution." I don't know whether he missed our regular meetings as much as I did: but when I saw him in

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East Orange or, now, in New York, he seemed more restless. A couple of years after the war ended, he decided to quit the cleaning plant. He set a date.

He told us the decision in our little apartment in Greenwich Village. I was working on my third novel. Laura was doing some acting and some ballet work. Mr. Cohen said to me, "If you want my job, my share of the business, they go together, you can have them. They're all yours. If you take them, I'll kill you."

It was one of the few money offers in my life that has not tempted me.

His partners in the plant were upset when they heard his decision. They said they would have to sell if he quit because they would never find a manager whom they could trust so completely. They told him he was much too young to retire, he was not yet sixty. He told them that was exactly the reason, his age: he wasn't going to retire, he wanted to do other work. They asked him to take a few months off, then return. But he quit. And they sold the plant. Mr. Cohen got his third of the proceeds.

He was too old to study medicine, his specially cherished frustration, but he thought he might get administrative or social work in a hospital. He had a gift for talking with people, for striking quickly a note of intimacy that depended as much on his reserve as on his sympathy; he didn't woo, he corresponded, and it usually worked. And he thought of a job with a refugee organization or with the UN, which was new and gleaming with hope in those days. He turned down business offers. A dry cleaner asked him to come in with him on a venture that, as it turned out, could have netted him a million in three years. He declined. When he heard about the million dollars three years later, he told Laura and me and said, "Excuse me, if you'll be so kind, for not leaving you a fortune."

I don't know how thoroughly he looked into the hospital or refugee or similar work. When I asked, he seemed to fade sideways, saying that he had talked to some people and it was very complicated. "Not as easy as you think, mister." He almost sounded as if it had all been my idea and I were pushing him; so I stopped asking. He went into work nothing like what he had often talked about. Ten or twelve months after he quit the cleaning plant, he bought the health club in Newark that he had been using almost daily for many years. He didn't take on the management of the place, he retained the old manager, but he went there almost every day for a few hours, for a workout and for business, except when he and Mrs. Cohen were traveling. I think he believed that owning the health club, though it was a business, at least connected him with rigor, with cleanliness, with some classical ideal.

I was disappointed in his choice, but I said nothing, not only because it would have been presumptuous but because I was getting old enough

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to understand, in my own life, something of the reality of the unachieved. He had meant the matters that he had often mentioned in our "window" talks, the longings for various kinds of work he would have chosen as a young man if responsibilities had not blocked him. But I think he had needed the sense of confinement, of barrier, to help him live his life. Perhaps now he felt too naked, too free, perhaps he needed some constraint.

At least he had left the work that was tedious and had moved into something less practical, from his friends' and ex-partners' point of view. That gratified him. "Let everyone go to hell his own way." I knew that my judgment of his choice was much less relevant than my acceptance. But I think he may have sensed the disappointment that I never uttered, never knowingly hinted.

He invited me to the club once. I disliked it. Steam rooms half suffocate, half bore me, and massage is like having my shoes shined, I can't wait until it's over. Besides, he and I were more careful to cover ourselves with winding sheets than we would have been with other men.

But the health club served me a good turn. In the late 1940s my own fortunes hit the first of several lows. Laura and I had left the repertory company long before. I had made some money on my first and second novels, and we had then quit the magazine jobs that were supporting us. Lately I had run into difficulties with my third novel, worse difficulties with some plays I had written. I began to feel the gravel in the road. Mr. Cohen found a way for the health club to help. My writing, my image as a writer, was important to him. He never talked about it, but I thought that, in some unpossessive pertinent way, I represented him. To help me continue at what I was doing, he put me on the health club payroll. Officially I became secretary-treasurer, though all I ever did was sign papers that he occasionally brought with him on visits, and he paid me a weekly salary, almost enough to get by on.

I was on salary for about a year, long enough to finish the novel I was working on, place it, and place myself in my first book-publishing job. Soon after—again I don't imply sequence—Mr. Cohen sold the health club. It had not gone well. When I suggested that perhaps my salary had been a drain, he thought my remark so stupid he didn't even reply. He said he found out too late that the club had not been doing as well as he had supposed when he bought it. Perhaps he had thought he could invigorate it by investing himself, more than his money, in this "non-business" business. He murmured something once or twice about the manager who ran the place, but in any case the membership faltered as costs rose. He had to leave it, what had been for him a middle position between the cleaning plant and a "genuine contribution."

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He may now have felt punished for not having done the sort of work he had long talked about. He certainly seemed a bit embarrassed. We saw each other every five or six weeks in East Orange or New York, but our talks were different. Shorter and, on his part, less assured. He was still a strong man in all senses, always in command, in his home, in restaurants, in his car which he never allowed anyone else to drive. But now I had the sense of his being slightly withdrawn, just as close but lightly muffled, just as close but seen through a distancing lens.

Then suddenly, painlessly, Mrs. Cohen died. Their marriage had been pleasant for both but clearly one-sided, arranged for him. Now he apparently felt a twinge of guilt about the long imbalance, and—the only action of his that I ever truly disliked—he began to talk about how much he missed his wife. The display was out of character. He knew I thought so, though I never said anything. It deepened a small crack that had come between us when the health club failed.

V

Within six months he married again. This shocked his late wife's brother, the one who had been a silent partner in the cleaning plant; the brother and his family took it as an offense to Laura's mother that Mr. Cohen had remarried so soon. That side of the family had little to do with him afterward. They never met his second wife.

Laura and I were glad of the marriage, though it was not the wife we had hoped for. A few months after Laura's mother died, we introduced Mr. Cohen to a friend of ours. Louise was a woman of about Mr. Cohen's age, the widow of an art critic. We had arranged it because we liked Louise very much, because she had almost come to look on Laura as a daughter, and because, visiting her often, we had met and liked many of her friends, contemporaries of hers who had been figures in the art and literary and theater worlds of the 1920s and 1930s, now gently faded like Louise herself. If anything developed between Mr. Cohen and Louise, she and her friends could move him into the world he had always talked about, had followed closely as an outsider.

And we had also arranged the meeting to rescue Mr. Cohen. A widower of sixty-five, of his presentability and modest affluence, was besieged. Widows pursued. The telephone begged. He had to get an unlisted number. He declined dinners.

He and Louise warmed to each other at once. She had the gift of receptivity: she knew how to listen, and respond, because she was interested; and she had humor, she could see her situation with him and enjoy it without embarrassment. Mr. Cohen liked to dress and behave elegantly, and nothing brought it out in him like a woman whom he

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could fuss over, serve drinks, escort to the table. The two of them talked easily. He told her a few of the old stories, the family ballads. She told him a few things about her late husband, whom Mr. Cohen had read of course, about trips they had made, experiences they had enjoyed.

That year we rented a summer place near Louise's home in Westchester, and we invited Mr. Cohen for a weekend. It was like handing a tenor an aria: the broiling of steaks outdoors was something about which he liked to fuss. Louise was there for dinner, of course, and he served her with "My dear lady" and she thanked him and said the steak was done perfectly, just as she preferred it and infrequently got it. I looked at Laura: it was as if they were dancing.

A few days after that weekend, Louise told Laura that she had invited Mr. Cohen to a dinner party at her apartment in New York and that he had accepted. And a few days later, she told Laura that he had telephoned with regrets. In a few weeks he told us that he was remarrying, someone we had not met.

Laura was disappointed. A few days later she telephoned Louise about something else so as not to assume expectation on Louise's part, and dropped in the news about Mr. Cohen. Louise at once said that she was delighted, then wrote Mr. Cohen a note of good wishes. Through the years, she made a point to ask from time to time how he was and to say how happy she was for him. She even said that she envied him because, after her husband, she had never found anyone whom she wanted to marry. Louise had grace.

The new Mrs. Cohen was a widow, too, wealthy, from Chicago, whom Laura's parents had met a few years before on a cruise and who had become a friend. She had chanced to be in New York when Laura's mother died, had read the death notice and had telephoned East Orange, had telephoned many times since. Mr. Cohen had given her the unlisted number. She had invited him to Chicago for a visit. He had stayed with her married daughter and had spent a lot of time in the widow's immense lake-front apartment. By the end of the visit, they had agreed to marry. Because she was so well established in a big home, with a much larger family around her than Mr. Cohen's, he agreed to move to Chicago, to that grand apartment.

When she came to New York before the wedding, Mr. Cohen took us all to dinner, and was elegant and attentive, even more than usual. The Chicago lady was more slim, more brisk and chic than Laura's mother. She was out to please; and neither Laura nor I would have allowed her to fail. Temperamentally she was quite different from Laura's mother, more vigorous, but clearly she was going to replace Laura's mother precisely on the intellectual scale.

Laura saw this, of course, and we talked about it later. She would

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have preferred Louise, but she could be only pleasantly rueful because her own mother was the point of reference. Anyway, she was glad that her father would have a companion and would not foolishly waste time on formal waiting.

I felt some shock. I was shocked into new clarity about Mr. Cohen. From our first days I had thought of him as a man who had wanted to dedicate himself to a struggle for principles, had been forced by circumstances to temper his struggle. I thought that, as time had gone on, he had enjoyed his frustrations a bit, enjoyed his differences from most of the people he knew, and from his wife. Without flaunting superiority, without meanness, he had enjoyed being the brainier of the two. But just as I had believed that he would go into some social work when he quit the cleaning plant, I had assumed after Mrs. Cohen's death that, if he remarried, he would choose a woman closer to his own mind.

Now I saw that he wanted his old role in marriage again: the fondly shackled giant, the bookworm among the bourgeoisie. That stance would have been impossible with Louise and her friends. It would work in Chicago.

He needed his patterns. He needed work that, in some degree, was not good enough for him. He needed a wife to whom he could be an adored superior.

Still if he was clinging to a middle position that exalted him without testing him too far, he also clung to matters that had always given him real distinction, his own stubborn ethics. Before he married his second wife, he insisted that they sign a legal document guaranteeing that none of her considerable wealth would be accessible to him and that, if she predeceased him, none of her estate would come to him. She argued against it, as did her children; he insisted. He also stipulated that he would pay all his personal expenses, clothes and so on. He could not afford to pay half of the monthly maintenance for her apartment, but he would pay half the expenses when they traveled, which they did frequently and far.

Laura and I went to Chicago for the wedding. When we left, I felt the curtain dropping on a scene whose light had been dimming anyway. Our best years, his and mine, had receded, and our meetings since then had developed a touch of strain. Distance would help. Now we could both blame distance for the dimming, and the fact that we saw each other only a few times a year.

There was never any friction between us. It was just the end of closeness. When I had first met him, he had made me feel, sheerly by his existence, that there had been a gap in my life; and simply by making me feel the gap, he had filled it. I wasn't sure that the gap had ceased to exist; I'm still not sure. But I had long known that, whatever the reason,

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his fault or mine, he was no longer filling it. I had felt the end coming. Chicago sealed it.

VI

He and his wife came through or to New York once in a while, en route to Europe or returning from abroad, or to see his grandchildren by his other daughter. Twice in those Chicago years, we went out there for parties, anniversary and birthday.

In Chicago I saw that he had gotten the reputation he wanted. His wife, her family and friends, were devoted to him, they thought he was courtly, a marvelous host. They also chuckled and shook their heads about his oddities. He wouldn't play in many of his wife's bridge parties: he would sit in another of the many rooms, reading and smoking his pipe. He often charged out on long walks by himself, half a day at a time. He found a health club and went often. He attended lectures. He kept hard and fit. He cut his hair even shorter and shaved his moustache, possibly out of some instinct toward sacerdotal age. I no longer knew enough or was intimate enough to guess about his happiness, but I could see that he had made the figure he wanted in this new city, as deliberately as a sculptor might have modeled a self-portrait.

He knew I knew, knew I was disappointed in him—anyway that the person who had met him in 1938 would have been disappointed. My own experience since then, my own grapples at different lives, had made me more tolerant. But then I knew he was disappointed in me, tolerant of me. I had not accomplished what he had dreamed of for me, had dreamed because of my own pronouncements. He never spoke about this to me, any more than I did the reverse; but we knew what we thought, knew it mostly through what we did not talk about when we met. Years later I learned that he had spoken explicitly about his disappointment in me to others in the family. Still he sometimes boasted in my presence about the work that I was doing. They were just not the boasts that he had hoped to make.

Once or twice a year, by some circumstance, we would be alone with each other for an hour or so, and we tried to recapture the "window" feeling. Time clouded it.

When he was seventy-nine, his wife, who was the same age, died. He liked her children and their children, but he decided to move back to New Jersey to be near his own family. He found a small apartment in South Orange, close to his other daughter.

We had fallen out of touch with Louise. He didn't ask about her, anyway. But he was indefatigable about women, for a while. He met

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another widow, markedly younger than himself—Miriam was in her early sixties—and began to spend time with her. He brought her to dinner at our apartment once, a nice woman with a touch of Louise's gentleness but nothing like her background. Miriam would have insured his role.

He was spruce for her, never more spruce. He had taken to wearing bow ties in his Chicago life, always true bow ties, not ready-mades, and they were tied with pointed perfection. His short hair, with no hint of balding, was now pure white. His apple-cheeks gleamed, his lean face was smooth.

He and Miriam went on a few trips together, Florida, the Caribbean. He proposed, and she considered it. But, as I heard, her children were firmly against it. They liked Mr. Cohen, but he was now eighty, and they didn't want their mother to become, in a few years, a nurse. She was persuaded. She declined Mr. Cohen's proposal but asked that they continue as friends.

He never saw her again. Reason had nothing to do with it: he was hurt. He was forced to feel old. His working life was finished; now his other role was finished. His gallantry now seemed superfluous. So far as I know, he never bought another article of clothing. Whenever I saw him, he looked scrupulously neat, but it was the common neatness of old men who want others to notice that they have not grown lax. It was not elegance.

About a year after Miriam declined him, he had some cardiac trouble—not a full-fledged attack, just some faltering. Illness had always enraged him. In the old East Orange days, when he caught cold and had to stay in bed, he wouldn't let anyone into the room. He once threw a pillow at me for going in to ask how he felt. Now he was not angry, only weak. Lying in the hospital bed, he looked like a strong old actor, letting go backstage.

The doctors had to install a pacemaker. He had to move from his apartment because he could no longer take care of himself without exhaustion and because none of us wanted to leave him unattended. He was discontent in a conventional nursing home. He moved into a sort of luxe small boardinghouse, in South Orange, where he had a very comfortable room and his own large bathroom, where he could have breakfast in his room, and where there were a few other elderly people with whom he could lunch or dine if he chose. The place was run by a pleasant woman who kept an eye on him.

Once a week Laura went out from Manhattan to spend an afternoon with him and always had a good time, she said. He always dressed up for her, charmed her as he knew she loved to be charmed by him. He always

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arranged tea and drinks for her. Sometimes they went for short walks, arm in arm. She told me she was having her best times with him since childhood.

I saw him much less frequently. It wasn't possible for me to go out often. The last time I saw him, we and others of the family went to dinner at a restaurant nearby. It was only a block away, but he had trouble getting there. He had trouble stepping down off the curb and up again. I thought of the wrestling and knew how he must hate this, hate being seen like this. All through that last dinner, I felt a shadow of dislike for me. Not anything so trivial as the fact that I didn't visit him often, but because I had seen things, more and more things through the years, that didn't fit his self-portrait and because I had wandered from my—and his—portrait of me.

After he returned from Chicago, even before the pacemaker, I can't remember one really good talk between us.

A few months after his eighty-fourth birthday, a few days after Laura had visited him and had a fine time with him, a day after his other daughter had seen him, he hanged himself in his room with a bathrobe cord. He left no note. His will and all his other papers were in perfect order.

I got the news by telephone at eight o'clock one morning. The first thing I thought of was ugliness. It was ugly to think of him hanging from a drapery rod in that room. Then I thought that I had to tell Laura. I did it as gently as I could but quickly. She trembled, but she didn't cry. She had to sit down. She stared silently for a while. I watched. Then she continued what she had been doing.

I went into my room and sat at my desk. I thought of the house with the dirt floor, the long arc of one American dream.

I soon felt I was supposed to feel guilty, and that made me angry. It was my imagination, of course—his action had been no more against me than against others, if it had been against anyone at all—still it made me angry. I had not judged him, at least not as much as he had judged himself. I remembered that, thirty years before, he had said, "Here's one Jew they'll never get in a camp." Feebleness, failure of control, of courtliness, failure of all his substitutes for what he had wanted as a boy, had become the camp to him. My anger turned to awe.

He was cremated, as Laura's mother had been, as Laura and I will be. Anything else, he had often said, was disgusting.

When his belongings were being packed to be given to various charities, I took a tie, one tie. I never wear it, but I'll always keep it. It is fine silk, smart, and, hanging alone, ironic. A choice of quality and a quality of choice.

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To Think

PHILIP BOOTH

Suppose the astronomers right:
the original bang, the cosmos

expanding: a fraction less
expansion, the universe would

have collapsed; a fraction more,
gravity wouldn't have held its

stars. But luck, if it was,
made possible biota. We began

to evolve toward wonder: man
on earth. But what if we alone

are conscious, if outside us
there is no measure of our

complexity? Who else could
believe the ways we invent

to see ourselves across time,
to hear across distance, to fire

ourselves into unbreathable sky?
Fire stations, curtainrods,

dogs, zoos, the traffic
down school steps to recess,

the beds we make kids in, the streams
we dam; who, in a cosmos

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empty of us, could account for
twi-night baseball or why

we bid Two No Trump or name
a trout fly Blue Cupsuptic?

If only we diagram stars,
and dream them into daylight

as signs of our meaning, as
proof of intent, or hope of

reason beyond our own, what
reason have we to imagine

that anyone might imagine us?
Who, for Christ's sake?

Until we invented God,
who could believe? We love

to believe, we have to believe
we love. But to think:

after we go, in the last
millisecond when boats,

Chicago, tulip beds,
wolves caged in Stuttgart,

incubators, and condoms
all blow, that the planet

will be beyond wonder, without
wonder what we were ever about.

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REAPPRAISAL

Randall Jarrell

Poet-Critic

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

After Randall Jarrell's sudden death in the fall of 1965, his publisher brought out a collection of tributes to him: essays and reviews of his poetry and criticism; personal recollections and appreciations of his character as a man. One expects a good deal of admiration in such a memorial volume, but the unfailingly interesting quality of these testimonies to his genius—I think the term is not too strong—from the pens of such different literary and cultural warriors as Hannah Arendt, Alfred Kazin, Leslie Fiedler, John Crowe Ransom, Karl Shapiro, and others is particularly striking. It is as if each rose to the occasion, knowing that he or she had been asked to write about a marvel; somehow the marvel lifted them up, and even veteran ax-grinders such as Fiedler or Shapiro sound relatively free of their obsessions. Most of the contributors take on the challenge of saying why Jarrell was different, in a class by himself, somehow beyond the reach of ordinary men in his writings and his life. On the superlative side there is Hannah Arendt: "Whatever I know of English poetry and perhaps of the genius of the language I owe to him." Or, more ruefully, there is Karl Shapiro describing what it felt like to have been unfavorably reviewed by him: "I felt as if I had been run over but not hurt." Looking up Jarrell's review (a 1948 one of *Trial of a Poet*), we find that the title poem is described as "a sort of bobby-soxer's *Mauberley*"; it is possible that after Shapiro picked himself up off the ground, he might have been so pleased with the ingenuity, even accuracy, of the epithet, that it hardly hurt at all.

More testimony. There is John Berryman telling of a time when Jarrell visited him in Princeton and claimed to have a hangover. Nothing odd for a poet to have a hangover, except that, as Berryman tells us, Jarrell didn't drink: "He's the only poet that I've ever known in the universe who simply did not drink. So how did he get the hangover? Well, he'd been to a cocktail party the day before in New York and had eaten a poisoned canapé. So here's Jarrell walking up and down in my living room, miserable and witty." Robert Lowell had also been invited to dinner, so Jarrell proceeded to make up and recite a typical Lowell poem, amusing everyone in the room but Lowell. Eventually, Berryman says, they quieted him down, gave him a book of pictures of the ballet to look at, and while the rest of them ate dinner, Jarrell sat on the couch, making witty remarks about ballet. Another contributor to the volume verifies the fact that not only did Jarrell not drink, he didn't smoke, he did not use profanity, and he did not like jokes about sex or even conversation about sex. And there is Robert Fitzgerald recalling a moment when he and Jarrell went swimming in a quarry during the summer of 1952 when they were both at the Kenyon School of Letters. Jarrell, in the midst of discovering the pleasures of Robert Frost's poetry, "hanging on a floating log in the quarry pool . . . began one day to quote aloud from the poem 'Provide, Provide,' and to his growing astonishment and delight succeeded in going straight through it from memory. 'Why, *I* didn't know I had memorized *that*!' Randall is one of the few men I have known who chortled. He really did. 'Baby doll!' he

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would cry, and his voice simply rose and broke in joy." Only a poet who never drank, a reviewer who ran you over but didn't hurt you, could quote "Provide, Provide" while hanging on a log in an Ohio quarry pool, then proceed to do something called "chortle." Baby doll, indeed!

To bring this introductory portrait of a marvel to its close, some sentences near the end of Robert Lowell's eulogy evoke the larger-than-life many-sidedness of the man, or myth, who was sensitive to everything:

> Poor modern-minded exile from the forests of Grimm, I see him unbearded, slightly South-American looking, then later bearded . . . then unbearded again. I see the bright, petty, pretty sacred objects he accumulated for his joy and solace: Vermeer's red-hatted girl, the Piero and Donatello reproductions, the photographs of his bruised, merciful heroes: Chekhov, Rilke, Marcel Proust. I see the white sporting Mercedes-Benz, the ever better cut and more deliberately jaunty clothes, the television with its long afternoons of professional football, those matches he thought miraculously more graceful than college football. . . . Now that he is gone, I see clearly that the spark from heaven really struck and irradiated the lines and being of my dear old friend—his noble, difficult, and beautiful soul.

Even for Lowell, who perhaps found it easy to rise to eulogistic heights for too many poets, this is a peak of something that one doesn't read without being moved. But after we get through being moved, after we have responded to the mythical Jarrell who imposed himself so powerfully and inspiringly on the minds and souls of his contemporaries, we may need to bring him, for awhile, back from the heaven into which their hosannas wafted him, to earth, to life, and to a fresh sense of why he mattered so much as a poet-critic.

I

Does he still matter so much as a critic? At a time when many professional students of literature, particularly younger ones, find themselves stimulated and guided by such a book as Geoffrey Hartman's *Criticism in the Wilderness,* in which something called "the English tradition in criticism" is confidently tagged and disposed of as "a kind of sublimated chatter," what are the chances of Jarrell's criticism still mattering? For surely Hartman's waggish patronizing is a clever way to name a habit of proceeding, which, typically, had this to say about Richard Wilbur's second book of poems: "An unusually reflective halfback told me that as a run develops there is sometimes a moment when you can 'settle for six or eight yards, or else take a chance and get stopped cold, or, if you're lucky, go the whole way.' Mr. Wilbur almost always settles for six or eight yards; and so many reviewers have praised him for this that in his second book he takes fewer risks than in his first. (He is like one of those Southern girls to whom everybody north of Baltimore has said, 'Whatever you do, *don't* lose that lovely Southern accent of yours'; after a few years they sound like Amos and Andy.)" Whether or not this comment, with its very American allusions to football and radio, is strictly in what Hartman calls "the English tradition," it's certainly chatter; and if its homely illustrations make it less than sublimated, try instead another typical Jarrellian passage, his response to the clutch of lines from Walt Whitman that conclude with "I was the man, I suffered, I was there":

> In the last lines of this quotation Whitman has reached—as great writers always reach—a point at which criticism seems not only unnecessary but absurd: these lines are so good that even admiration feels like insolence, and one is ashamed of anything that one can find to say about them. How anyone can dismiss or accept patronizingly the man who wrote them, I do not understand.

It would be a pretty bold or extremely small-minded reader of that piece of sublimation (indeed of the sublime, as they say at Yale) who could raise his voice to disagree with or even to qualify the claim.

These examples may serve to identify two recurrent and essential habits in Jarrell's critical procedure that are so thoroughly internalized they seem as natural as breathing: first, the use of wit, wisecrack, sarcasm, and the brilliant one-liner as a devastatingly compressed response to a poet, worth more than a thousand words; second, the large-souled testimony to a poet's overwhelming fineness which leaves the critic, after his testimony, wordless. It's not just, or even mainly, that

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Whitman's lines are so great as to abide no critical questioning; rather, Jarrell keeps working to place himself in situations where he can say the equivalent of, "Look, you and I are readers, and I've been (I admit it) turning out this piece on the man's poetry, but really he's too large for my writing, for my categories, for *mere* 'criticism.' I'm almost ashamed of what I've said; on the other hand I'm large enough—not just a mere critic—to recognize and salute the size of his achievement. What about it, reader? Wouldn't you rather throw up your hands and marvel along with me at the gap between art and words about art, than keep plugging away at your pious close analysis? *Ars longa, vita brevis*, baby doll!"

This attempt to write criticism that would not be mere "criticism," that would be always conscious of (to use his own words about Whitman) the "point at which criticism seems not only unnecessary but absurd," is, consciously or not, a method of disarming the reader, of inviting him to feel capacious and freewheeling rather than constricted and pedantic. If you are having trouble reading Whitman, if you keep breaking down in *Leaves of Grass*, appalled by this or that piece of rodomontade—

> Americanos! conquerors! marches humanitarian!
> Foremost! century marches! Libertad! masses!
> For you a programme of chants

—don't think that you've seen through anything Jarrell hasn't seen through and then seen through his seeing through of it. ("I have said so little about Whitman's faults because they are so plain: baby critics who have barely learned to complain of the lack of ambiguity in *Peter Rabbit* can tell you all that is wrong with *Leaves of Grass*.") So much for Whitman's faults—go ahead and point them out if you aspire to being a baby critic, and how unnecessary and absurd you will show yourself to be. Or consider a two-line poem of Frost's titled "An Answer":

> But Islands of the Blessèd, bless you son,
> I never came upon a blessèd one.

Have you taken the full measure of "An Answer"? Not if you don't see that "this strange little joke" has undergone a sea change "so that it becomes worthy of Prospero himself, all nacreous with lyric, tender, amused acceptance and understanding and reget. If you haven't or can't feel this—you *are* a Convention of Sociologists." What could be more degrading than to be *that*, gasps the reader, resolved to take the little couplet altogether more seriously than he had managed to previously.

It takes a stubborn, not to say an ungracious, reader to resist this disarmament and hold back from going all the way from Frost to Prospero, or from "Americanos!" to Whitman's faults not mattering except to pedants. In Jarrell's first essay on Wallace Stevens he does a skillful dance by way of discussing Stevens's sense of the isolation of the poet in twentieth-century, businesslike America. He quotes (from *Harmonium*) "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock," in which Stevens laments that life lacks color, that all the houses are haunted by white nightgowns ("None of them are strange") and says that in the town

> People are not going
> To dream of baboons and periwinkles.
> Only, here and there, an old sailor,
> Drunk and asleep in his boots,
> Catches tigers
> In red weather.

Jarrell begins his commentary on the poem breezily, admitting that "any schoolboy (of the superior Macaulayish breed) more or less feels what [it] means," then selects various details which he presses into a little allegory about how, in this prim, colorless world where everybody goes to bed at ten, the only color and poetry lie in a "drunken and disreputable *old sailor* [who] still lives in the original reality (he doesn't dream of catching, he *catches*): *sailor* to bring in old-fashioned Europe, old-fashioned Asia, the old-fashioned ocean; *old* to bring in the past, to make him a dying survival. What indictment of the Present has ever compared, for flat finality, with 'People are not going / To dream of baboons and periwinkles'? Yet isn't this poem ordinarily considered a rather nonsensical and Learish poem?"

As so often in his criticism, Jarrell writes as if a question like the last one, rhetorical and casually turned, is the perfect touch to make

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the scales fall, once more, from our eyes, now able as we are to see the profundity of what we mistook for a trifle of a poem. So it's worth making the effort to answer one of these unanswerable questions: "What indictment of the Present has ever compared, for flat finality, with those baboons and periwinkles?" Well, for one, try:

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never never, never never!

Or try these lines from Wordsworth:

My former thoughts returned, the fear that kills
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain and labor, and all fleshly ills
And mighty poets in their misery dead.

You may then find that Stevens's fanciful fooling around with baboons and periwinkles doesn't really rate very high on the flat-finality scale; indeed you may find, after all, that Stevens's poem is more like Edward than King Lear. But chances are that rather than engaging in such a questioning of Jarrell's claim for the Stevens poem, you will instead be carried along by the convincing strength and ease of his tone. Isn't it pedantic to make a fuss over what he says about one little poem, since the flow of his rhetoric is so persuasive, the act such a pleasure to observe?

In one of his Frost essays, Jarrell quoted what Sarah Bernhardt said about Nijinsky: "I fear, I greatly fear, that I have just seen the greatest actor in the world." Jarrell imagines Yeats saying it about Frost, but I think any witness of this critic's own performance, in the essays collected in *Poetry and the Age, The Third Book of Criticism,* and now in *Kipling, Auden and Company,* would find it has a reflexive application. Our original response to these essays is surely to appreciate how much fun they are; later we can reread them with delight, noticing—except for an allusion here or there reminding us that he has read more than we have—how free they are from the snags that meet us on any page of the essays of really difficult critics such as William Empson or R. P. Blackmur, to say nothing of more recent agonizings in literary theory. They are essays that invite reading aloud—particularly the ones on general subjects like "The Obscurity of the Poet" (given originally as a lecture) or "The Age of Criticism,"—that feel as if they were designed, above all else, for the purpose of keeping the reader awake and entertained. Of course it is exactly this high-stepping confidence, one joke or clever saying after another, that has caused some to feel that the procedure is too clever to be true, that an essay such as "The Age of Criticism" is mainly an exercise in showing off how much Jarrell has read that others haven't: long on witty complaint, short on helpful analysis and diagnosis.

However justified such complaints might be about, in particular, "The Age of Criticism," they are less interesting to consider than what that essay reveals of Jarrell's central critical identity. In a posthumous tribute to him, Fiedler made the acute suggestion that Jarrell was "not *quite* a critic finally, but rather a 'real reader' joined in a single body to a compulsive talker." Although I'd prefer to call him *quite* a critic rather than not quite a critic, Fiedler is right to emphasize the "real reader" aspect, and not in quotation marks either. The most striking moment from "The Age of Criticism" comes when Jarrell launches into the list of books, about which he says if you wanted to discuss them with somebody at a party, you would be out of luck. If you wanted to talk about *Ulysses* or *The Castle* or *The Brothers Karamazov* or *The Great Gatsby,* you would be in luck.

But if you wanted to talk about Turgenev's novelettes, or THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD, or LAVENGRO, or LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI, or THE OLD WIVES' TALE, or THE GOLOVLYOV FAMILY, or Cunningham-Grahame's stories, or Saint-Simon's memoirs, or LOST ILLUSIONS, or THE BEGGAR'S OPERA, or EUGEN ONEGIN, or LITTLE DORRIT, or THE BURNT NJAL SAGA, or PERSUASION, or the INSPECTOR-GENERAL, or OBLOMOV, or PEER GYNT, or FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD, or OUT OF AFRICA, or the PARALLEL LIVES, or A DREARY STORY, or DEBITS AND CREDITS, or ARABIA DESERTA, or ELECTIVE AFFINITIES, or SCHWEIK, or—or any of a thousand good or interesting but Unimportant books, you couldn't expect a very ready knowledge or sympathy from most of the readers there.

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You may recall your individual experience as a reader of this passage, how guilty it did or didn't make you feel, about how many of the titles you could, then or now, put together a few sentences of possible interest and conviction. As one who has always liked going to parties, I used to imagine a less superficial society of readers than those that hung out at the parties Jarrell attended and didn't drink at; I and my like-minded friends would, at these ideal parties, exchange fine insights about books—and not just about the approved ones either. (I was cured of this fantasy when I began to read Wyndham Lewis and found at a party that not even my best friends and colleagues wanted to talk to me about, or even wanted to read, *Tarr* or *The Revenge for Love* or *Snooty Baronet*.) Think of how the other readers at Jarrell's imaginary party must have felt about him: here comes that guy who never drinks and is always asking me what I think of Cunningham-Grahame's stories; or, there he is again, and I still haven't touched *Elective Affinities!* The more you think about it the stranger it seems, and one begins to appreciate another remark of Fiedler's about how the roots of Jarrell's taste were closer to madness than to method—which I translate to mean that he couldn't help himself, that he was the servant of his own brilliant gift.

"It is his reading that we judge a critic by, not his writing," Jarrell says in "The Age of Criticism." The caveat is directed against cultivating a style for its own literary effects, rather than "responding to the true nature and qualities of a work of art" and being able to distinguish good writing from bad. But the essay's force as a whole is its insistence that to be a really interesting critic you've got to be extensive and daring in the books you read. This is going to take up a lot of time, since you must make room for both Cunningham-Grahame and Goethe. Indeed, the reason why those other, unreal readers at the parties Jarrell imagines couldn't talk about very many books off the highbrow top-ten list was that they tended to go to parties; nowadays they go to the movies three nights a week instead. This isn't to say that the critic as Heroic Reader has passed from the scene. There is George Steiner for one, who is known to have cast his eyes over everything ever in print, and not just novels and poems. The difference is, I think, that as with the discovery in the quarry that he could recite "Provide, Provide," Jarrell always seems to be discovering something for himself, as if for the first time and right before our eyes, while Steiner, or perhaps Frank Kermode, writes as if he had taken it all in at an early age, effortlessly. Jarrell's prose cultivates surprise, sudden glory, wildness: as a description of the kind of reader he wants to encourage, he reaches instinctively for the word *wild,* which Emerson and Frost had used previously to indicate the quality of the poetry they cared about. Vowing his love of "wild air," Emerson, looking into a new issue of the *Dial,* could tell in a moment "which is the wild poetry, and which the tame" and could see also that "one wild line out of a private heart saves the whole book." Frost's tribute in "The Figure a Poem Makes" is similar: "If it is a wild tune, it is a poem." Jarrell laments that too many tame critics act as if, really, they'd rather do anything than read: "Good Lord, you don't think I *like* to read, do you?" he imagines them saying to someone insufficiently impressed with what a serious business it all is. By contrast, "Readers, real readers, are almost as wild a species as writers."

It takes an extraordinary effort to become a "real" reader-critic: "Real criticism demands of human beings an almost inhuman disinterestedness"; or, "Criticism demands of the critic a terrible nakedness: a real critic has no one but himself to depend on. He can never forget that all he has to go by, finally, is his own response, the self that makes and is made up of such responses." We have perhaps become all too domesticated to such utterances; D. H. Lawrence said it before at least as eloquently. Still that word *finally* in Jarrell's description of the real critic ("all he has to go by, finally, is his own response") deserves looking at. Jarrell's "finally" came a good deal nearer the beginning of his dealings with a poem than at the end of them. His absolute reliance on taste, on what he hears in the poem and whether what he hears is worth hearing, reminds me of no other recent critic of literature so much as B. H. Haggin, two of whose volumes of music criticism Jarrell reviewed handsomely. For years Haggin gave a lecture titled, uncompromisingly, "The Approach to Music," and that approach was

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through no more and no less than what one *heard* in the performance. Once a student asked him tentatively, at the close of this lecture, whether there might not be other "approaches"—such as the musicological one—which could also, perhaps, at times be of some use. The answer was, unequivocally, no. Haggin's own "finally" was really there all along—"a real critic has no one but himself to depend on," as Jarrell put it. But Jarrell's actual practice is less severe and exclusive than Haggin's; and part of the reason for this is suggested in the final paragraph of "The Age of Criticism" where he puts on a sincere face and tells us the kind of essay against current criticism he *should* have written: "An article like this ought, surely, to avoid satire; it ought to be documented and persuasive and sympathetic, much in sorrow and hardly at all in anger." It's hard to know whether he realized quite the length of his own ingenuousness here, which says, in effect, "Sorry if I've been a bad boy and fooled around, but you'll forgive me, I trust; next time I promise to be more sober and objective." In fact he never tried to "avoid satire" but went out of his way to look for it—and usually found it—often with consequences so amusing that they frustrate any attempt to follow and assess, agree or disagree with an argument about, say, the age of criticism.

One example of such satire will have to do: the charming passage from "The Age of Criticism" about the pig and the bacon. Jarrell is complaining about the patronizing superiority affected by critics toward the writers they criticize, and he tells of attending a meeting where critics were discussing Wordsworth's theories of poetry. Their patronizing tone toward Wordsworth was similar to what a novelist-friend of his had detected at a writers' conference, where the novelist went to the critics' lectures but the critics didn't to his—as if he weren't really literary enough for them. It is as if, Jarrell says, "*they* knew how poems and novels are put together, and Wordsworth and my friend didn't, but had just put them together. In the same way, if a pig wandered up to you during a bacon-judging contest, you would say impatiently, 'Go away, pig! What do you know about bacon?'" This is, of course, irresistible, so much so that for years I never questioned its perfect appropriateness as a rebuke to critical hubris. Yet when considered, it seems less than final. After all, if you were judging bacon and a pig wandered up to you, distracted your attention from the critical task at hand, wouldn't you be tempted to respond impatiently to him? What in fact *does* the pig know about bacon? One might even say that bacon is just what the pig can't know about, is no concern of his, except insofar as he's likely to be made into it, and that such an eventuality is not a matter for sensitive discrimination. Or we might consider that whatever Jarrell's friend the novelist knew about his own work, Wordsworth liked all of his poems more or less equally well, treated them all with the highest degree of reverence, couldn't tell which was bacon and which was ham.

My point is not to defend the critics, who were probably a grim enough lot, but to show how fertile was Jarrell's analogy bank and how he was perfectly willing to raid it and let the analogy carry him away, with "In the same way" doing very loose work indeed as a connector of poets and pigs. This passage is, I suppose, an example of the sort of satire he apologizes for later on in the essay, says he really shouldn't have practiced; but its deepest point may be not that critics are blind, but that anything—criticism, discrimination, words *about* the thing—pales when the thing itself, like a pig or a Wordsworth, wanders up to you. Satire is good because it helps us become freshly aware of this wondrous fact and of our limitations in front of it: "Art matters not merely because it is the most magnificent ornament and the most nearly unfailing occupation of our lives, but because it is life itself," he says in "The Obscurity of the Poet," the other "topic" essay from *Poetry and the Age*. And if you're going to criticize "life itself," how can you possibly do so without revealing yourself to be, in comparison, small-minded or, at any rate, a good deal less than magnificent?

This was the challenge Jarrell took on in criticizing the poetry of Frost, Stevens, Ransom, Graves, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Auden, Lowell, Elizabeth Bishop, and others. Almost all of this criticism, except for the first Auden essay, appeared in the postwar years and ceased around 1955. In American criticism of poetry,

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certainly of modern poetry, its only rival is the series of essays published in the 1930s by R. P. Blackmur in *The Double Agent* and *The Expense of Greatness*. It is hardly surprising to find that on a poem Blackmur is often deeper and subtler than Jarrell, since he was deeper and subtler than anyone. Recalling the breezy assurance with which Jarrell handled Stevens's "Disillusionment at Ten O'Clock," as if it were clearly "about" life, "an indictment of the Present" rather than Learish or nonsensical, we might recall also that it was Blackmur who years before had said of the poem, after quoting the same lines about baboons, periwinkles, and the drunk old sailor: "Every part of the poem makes literal sense. Yet the combination makes a nonsense, and a nonsense much more convincing than the separate sensible statements." He went on to speak of Stevens's language having "a persuasive force out of all relation to the sense of the words": "The simpler the words are the more impressive and certain is their ambiguity. Half our sleeping knowledge is in nonsense; and when put in the poem it wakes." But if Blackmur is subtle and deep, he is also murky and pretentious, humorless in the main, long-winded. Art is a serious business, much more hieratic and formal than "life itself." Blackmur would never have been so bold or amateurish as to make up a list of favorite poems, as Jarrell does for each poet he writes about; the latter's reliance on taste inclines him more toward evaluation. And, of course, compared to Blackmur he seems freer of the Pound-Eliot modernist poetic; there are many other ways to be interesting and attractive in poems—Frost's or Graves's or Ransom's. Furthermore, Jarrell differs from most poet-critics in that the catholicity of his admiration (Frost *and* Eliot, Stevens *and* Williams) exists in relation to a comparative lack of egoism in his own poetry. "Style is the way the man takes himself," said Frost, and Jarrell did not take himself as a great poet, as a heroic poet, as a wonder—the way his contemporary Robert Lowell very much took himself. Lowell admired everybody, not just his predecessors but his contemporaries; and yet, without demeaning him by saying it, I have always felt something forced, willed, too *occasional*, in his screwing himself up for one more moving tribute to Williams or Crane or Plath or Jarrell himself. Lowell was always somehow in competition with them; whereas one might read Jarrell's critical appreciations endlessly and never think to turn to his own poetry.

II

I now propose to turn to that poetry, making an attempt at Jarrellian characterization and appreciation. For not dwelling more on fine particular moments from the critical essays, I excuse myself by assuming that one has one's own favorites and that the more sweeping, impressionistic sense of it I've given is appropriate to the kind of critic (or as Fiedler would say, not-quite-critic) he was. As for his reputation as a poet, he has surely won a place in the anthologies, yet I want to claim for him more than that, allowing for the possibility that my "estimate" (in the Arnoldian sense) may be less a "real" one (seeing the object as in itself it really is) than a personal one. For even though the number of fully achieved poems is small, and the amount of dross in the *Collected Poems* substantial, he is, along with Lowell, the American poet from the latter part of this century I return to most often, and with continuing rewards, new discoveries. Berryman, Roethke, Nemerov, the admirable Bishop and Wilbur and Merrill—all in their different ways can be admired as creators of more finished, concentrated, even verbally distinctive poems; yet Jarrell has something more, and to be as embarrassing as possible, I will claim that what he has more of in his poetry is life.

The word *life* certainly occurs often enough in those poems, as in this passage from the long meditation "Woman," published in *The Lost World*, where the poet muses on how quickly "the bride's veils evaporate," and she turns into a wife:

A girl hesitates a moment in mid-air
And settles to the ground a wife, a mother.
Each evening a tired spirit visits
Her full house; wiping his feet upon a mat
Marked *Women and Children First*, the husband looks
At this grown woman. She stands there in slacks
Among the real world's appliances,
Women, and Children; kisses him hello
Just as, that morning, she kissed him goodbye,
And he sits down, till dinner, with the paper.

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This home of theirs is haunted by a girl's
Ghost. At sunset a woodpecker knocks
At a tree by the window, asking their opinion
Of life. The husband answers, "Life is life,"
And when his wife calls to him from the kitchen
He tells her who it was, and what he wanted.
Beating the whites of seven eggs, the beater
Asks her her own opinion; she says, "Life
Is life." "See how it sounds to say it isn't,"
The beater tempts her. "Life is not life,"
She says. It sounds the same. Putting her cake
Into the oven, she is satisfied
Or else dissatisfied: it sounds the same.

Readers of Jarrell's earlier poems will find nothing surprising about the notion these lines play with—that the yearnings and dissatisfactions that occur to us as we go about our lives aren't amenable to formulaic understanding; that to think of yourself as satisfied or dissatisfied may not make very much difference ("it sounds the same") insofar as you keep on doing what you're doing. In one of the best of those earlier poems, "A Girl in a Library," the college girl has fallen asleep instead of studying her Home Ec and Phys Ed textbooks, and the poet encourages her to "let them go" as he dreams her into something richer than the ordinary world. Eventually she receives a visitation from Pushkin's Tatyana Larina (from *Eugen Onegin*) to whom the poet laments the girl's unshakeable innocence, even when "in the last light sleep of dawn the messenger / Comes with his message":

Oh Tatyana,
The Angel comes: better to squawk like a chicken
Than to say with truth, "But I'm a *good* girl,"
And meet his Challenge with a last firm strange
Uncomprehending smile; and—then, then!—see
The blind date that has stood you up: your life.
(For all this, if it isn't, perhaps, life,
Has yet, at least, a language of its own
Different from the books'; worse than the books'.)
And yet, the ways we miss our lives are life.
Yet . . . yet . . .
to have one's life add up to *yet!*

The girl will turn into the woman, beating those eggs into a cake and being teased by the beater into momentary rebelliousness, into saying "life is not life." Yet "the ways we miss our lives are life," a further truth to which the only response is "Yet . . . to have one's life add up to *yet!*"

In the long perspective we see that Jarrell's aim as a poet was importantly similar to his practice as a critic, since he attempted—and succeeded, mainly in the poems from his last book—to work himself into situations where he stood before "life." That life might be exhibited in a poem by Frost or Whitman; in the poetry it is more often than not embodied in the figure of a woman at the stove or a girl in a library. Confronted with life, the poet finds that words fail him, almost; he comes to the limits of his language, of mere poetry, and yet. . . . And yet this condition of awe, admiration, sadness, speechlessness is achieved only after and through intensely playful sequences like the lovely description of the husband ("a tired spirit") coming home at close of day and wiping his feet on the mat marked "Women and Children First"; or like the Phys Ed girl in the library whose spiritual innocence has a good deal of physical and vocal ballast:

This is a waist the spirit breaks its arm on.
The gods themselves, against you, struggle in vain.
The broad low strong-boned brow; these heavy eyes;
These calves, grown muscular with certainties;
This nose, three medium-sized pink strawberries
—But I exaggerate. In a little you will leave:
I'll hear, half squeal, half shriek, your laugh of greeting—
Then, *decrescendo*, bars of that strange speech
In which each sound sets out to seek each other,
Murders its own father, marries its own mother,
And ends as one grand transcendental vowel.

Remembering that Jarrell the critic once spoke of Wallace Stevens's poems as transcendental—all too transcendental études—one hears once more, in the crack about the vowels of the girl's speech, the clever epigrammatist. But in his poetry Jarrell learned to control that ready wit, or rather to direct it into verbal play where the effect was one of strangeness, of opening up into something hitherto undisclosed, discovered at a dramatic moment in the poem—instead of closing down the hatches with a killer line.

An effect of this sort is what distinguishes a poem that is short enough to quote entirely and that perhaps provides a test case for separating those whose admiration for his poetry is extreme and those whose admiration is less enthusiastic. Here is "Aging":

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I wake, but before I know it it is done,
The day, I sleep. And of days like these the years,
A life is made. I nod, consenting to my life.
. . . But who can live in these quick-passing hours?
I need to find again, to make a life,
A child's Sunday afternoon, the Pleasure Drive
Where everything went by but time; the Study Hour
Spent at a desk, with folded hands, in waiting.

In those I could make. Did I not make in them
Myself? The Grown One whose time shortens,
Breath quickens, heart beats faster, till at last
It catches, skips. . . . Yet those hours that seemed, were endless

Were still not long enough to have remade
My childish heart: the heart that must have, always
To make anything of anything, not time,
Not time but—
but, alas! eternity.

The sad joke on which this poem turns is of course the notion, in its double sense, of "making a life." A life is made, alas, by living, by opening the oven door once more and putting in the cake. But "to find again, to make a life" is something else again, a matter for eternity rather than time. In this poem "the Pleasure Drive . . . the Study Hour" are just capitalized stabs at such a making, though they suggest how strong the current of nostalgia ran in Jarrell's sensibility. One remembers the final stanza from a little poem titled aptly, "In Those Days":

> How poor and miserable we were,
> How seldom together!
> And yet after so long one thinks:
> In those days everything was better.

Everything was better, everything seemed endless in places like the pleasure drive or study hall, because they so irrevocably belong to those days and are so indisputably not these days here now, through which the Grown One too quickly passes.

Jarrell's nostalgia I see not as a debilitating limitation, an "immaturity," but as his special gift or curse, a unique way of making a life. There is a beautiful instance of such making in the poem "The Lost Children," in which a woman watches her grown-up daughter show the daughter's husband pictures of her childhood from the photograph album the woman has kept:

He enjoys them
And makes fun of them. I look too
And I realize the girl in the matching blue
Mother-and-daughter dress, the fair one carrying
The tin lunch box with the half-pint thermos bottle
Or training her pet duck to go down the slide
Is lost just as the dark one, who is dead, is lost.
But the world in which the two wear their flared coats
And the hats that match, exists so uncannily
That, after I've seen its pictures for an hour,
I believe in it: the bandage coming loose
One has in the picture of the other's birthday,
The castles they are building, at the beach for asthma.
I look at them and all the old sure knowledge
Floods over me, when I put the album down
I keep saying inside: "I did know those children.
I braided those braids. I was driving the car
The day she stepped in the can of grease
We were taking to the butcher for our ration points.
I *know* those children. I know all about them.
Where are they?"

As "all the old sure knowledge" floods over her, she rises to passionate insistence: in those days everything was better, even if the thing was a can of grease and a trip to the butcher's, because of the intensity with which it can now be known, held absolutely in imagination.

This is the nostalgic's reward, and Jarrell's poetry often plays with the way in which it does and doesn't constitute a reward. In the final poem from *The Lost World* volume, the fifty-year-old bearded poet, revisiting Los Angeles where he grew up, finds that "Back in Los Angeles, we missed / Los Angeles," that he can't find the bow and arrows he used to wield, or his crystal set, or his mother's dark blue Buick—all those things that made up what he calls "The Gay Twenties": "But it's all right: they *were* gay, / O so gay! A certain number of years after, / Any time is Gay. . . ." Finally, the rememberer of things past contemplates his own present condition:

When my hand drops to the wheel,
It is brown and spotted, and its nails are ridged
Like Mama's. Where's my own hand? My smooth
White bitten-fingernailed one? I seem to see
A shape in tennis shoes and khaki riding-pants
Standing there empty-handed: I reach out to it
Empty-handed, my hand comes back empty,
And yet my emptiness is traded for its emptiness,
I have found that Lost World in the Lost and Found

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Columns whose gray illegible advertisements
My soul has memorized world after world:
LOST—NOTHING. STRAYED FROM NOWHERE. NO REWARD
I hold in my own hands, in happiness,
Nothing: the nothing for which there's no reward.

It is his wit that saves this touching passage from mawkishness, but a more gently rueful wit than is usually encountered in the sharp edges of his criticism.

The interesting thing about this poem, "Thinking of the Lost World," and what gives it the distinctive Jarrell accent, is the way it insists on ending in happiness, in the sense of loss made radiant and serene. Beginning with his earliest work, the notion of loss had informed his poetry; an earlier 1948 book was titled *Losses*; the war poems, whose excellence and rareness only become apparent after repeated exposure to them, are full of it. His last volume, *The Lost World*, has as its opening poem the unforgettable "Next Day," in which a middle-aged woman confronts what she has become. As the shopboy puts her groceries in the car, she notices that he doesn't notice her, and she realizes that

Now I am good.
The last mistaken,
Ecstatic, accidental bliss, the blind

Happiness that, bursting, leaves upon the palm
Some soap and water—
It was so long ago, back in some Gay
Twenties, Nineties, I don't know . . . Today I miss
My lovely daughter
Away at school, my sons away at school,

My husband away at work—I wish for them.

People tell her she is fortunate, still young-seeming, exceptional, and she admits it:

I *am* exceptional;
I think of all I have.
But really no one is exceptional,
No one has anything, I'm anybody,
I stand beside my grave
Confused with my life, that is commonplace and solitary.

Again the standing before life; the revelation (in Stevens's words) of "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" is given fresh truth by Jarrell's chilling line, "No one has anything, I'm anybody," and the final descent into silence as the poem ends. Although superficially "Next Day" ends in an unhappy manner, unlike the final "Thinking of the Lost World," where the speaker holds in his own hands "in happiness / Nothing," the poems are alike fortifying and consoling in their effect. After reading a poem by Lowell or Berryman one may say, "What an impressive performance; what a daring improvisation." With Jarrell (and here he is more like Bishop at her best), the figure the poem makes is less interesting (think how typographically nondescript and formless Jarrell's poems usually look on the page) than the illusion of life it creates and illuminates.

In a somewhat confusing early poem of his, "Seele im Raum," a woman who for years had imagined there was an eland at her dinner table subjects herself to ultimate questions about her voice, her life, and is eventually granted an answer from within her, spoken

in a voice
Rich with a kind of longing satisfaction:
"To own an eland! That's what I call life!"

Jarrell's own madness, his nervous breakdown for which he was hospitalized for three months, came in February 1965, the final year of his life. Just before it happened, according to Mary Jarrell, his wife, "He was granted a few magic weeks of Lisztian virtuosity when nothing in his lectures or readings was veiled to him any longer. Everything his heart desired seemed possible to him." She says that "poems flew at him," "until just words beat at his head like many wings." Other magical things happened; a devotee of pro football, he finally met and talked to Johnny Unitas. Then came the ordeal of his breakdown, followed by a seeming recovery as he resumed teaching in the fall, then the sudden death in October when he was struck down by a car. But I like to think that sometime in that last year he was granted, in extreme vision or on the manic side of breakdown, a sense of the oneness of poetry and life, too heady to be lived with for very long.

In the posthumously published poem, "A Man Meets a Woman in the Street," which I presume to have been written during that

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time, the focus or vehicle of this sense of oneness is a woman, followed by the narrator in a New York City street. She provokes him to meditations on things ranging from Proust's Swann, to Madame Schumann-Heink, to Strauss's *Elektra* and Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, to Proust's Bergotte, to Greta Garbo listening to a joke about McGillicuddy and McGillivray, to finally the birds he'd heard that morning, back in the country, and how as the birds played their daily piece

I wished as men wish: "May this day be different!"
The birds were wishing, as birds wish—over and over,
With a last firmness, intensity, reality—
"May this day be the same!"

But as the poem proceeds to its close, the man walks faster and reaches out to touch the woman, finding not "the nothing for which there's no reward" but something else, only attainable, it seems, on the threshold, at the last moment of a poetic career:

Because, after all, it *is* my wife
In a new dress from Bergdorf's, walking toward the park.
She cries out, we kiss each other, and walk arm in arm
Through the sunlight that's much too good for New York,
The sunlight of our own house in the forest.
Still, though, the poor things need it . . . We've no need
To start out on Proust, to ask each other about Strauss.
We first helped each other, hurt each other, years ago.
After so many changes made and joys repeated,
Our first bewildered, transcending recognition
Is pure acceptance. We can't tell our life
From our wish. Really I began this day
Not with a man's wish: "May this day be different,"
But with the birds' wish: "May this day
Be the same day, the day of my life."

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Reunion of the Third Platoon

JOHN DICKSON

They drink while half the stars set,
laugh and talk lightly
of life and death with the Third Platoon
their eyes bright with the ritual of telling—
heroic and proud
but still very much like aging clerks.

Telling of Dietrich and Chavez and Henderson
running through the flaming village
drifting over the streets unaware of their legs.
How Maloney was pitchforked as soon as he landed—
staring up at the sky he had dropped from,
a small bubble of death on his lips.
Or Murphy, how he braced himself on a rock—
his machine gun barrel hot,
flies laying eggs in his wounded shoulder.

Now Anderson talking. Now Roberts,
his hands describing battles and barracks
but not the night he had DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR
tattooed on his arm—
half drunk on two beers
imagining medals on his first uniform
just fresh from the warehouse.

Never a word about Stein going mad
still keeping a pistol under his pillow
dreaming pantomime battles

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the same bullet burning his gut over and over
or how Sergeant Bartoli grows sad and vague
if he sees a dead bird or a butterfly wing.
His wife says he sits too much alone.

No one mentions next year . . . or meeting again.
But they'll all be back
except maybe Peters, who seemed out of breath
several times tonight
or Williams, who always acts restless
when they get together like this.

✪ JOHN DICKSON's first collection of poetry, *Victoria Hotel*, was published last year by Chicago Review Press.

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Waving Good-bye to My Father

MICHAEL BLUMENTHAL

Fleischmanns, N.Y., 31 August 1981

My father, folding towards the earth again, plays
his harmonica and waves his white handkerchief
as I drive off over the hills to reclaim my life.

Each time, I am sure it's the last, but it's been
this way now for twenty-five years: my father
waving and playing "Auf Wiedersehen," growing
thin and blue as a late summer iris, while I,
who have the heart for love but not the voice for it,
disappear into the day, wiping the salt from my cheeks
and thinking of women. There is no frenzy
like the frenzy of his happiness, and frenzy, I know now,
is never happiness: only the loud, belated cacophony
of a lost soul having its last dance before it sleeps forever.

The truth, which always hurts, hurts now:
I have always wanted another father—one
who would sit quietly beneath the moonlight, and in
the clean, quiet emanations of some essential manhood,
speak to me of what, now a kind of man myself,
I wanted to hear.

But this is not a poem about self-pity.

As I drive off, some deep, masculine quiet rises,
of its own accord, from beneath my shoes. I turn
to watch my father's white handkerchief flutter,
like an old Hasid's worn prayer shawl, among
the dark clouds and the trees. I drive out
into the clean, quiet resonance of my own life.
To live, dear father, *is to forgive*. And I forgive.

MICHAEL BLUMENTHAL's first book of poems is *Sympathetic Magic*. He is at work on a second book to be entitled *Wishes That Could Last a Lifetime*.

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Bach at Potsdam

OTTO L. BETTMANN

Great men, like stars, light up the horizon of history. When two such men cross paths the meeting can have an extraordinary effect, not only upon the participants themselves but also upon the world at large. The word *epochal* fairly describes the consequences of such encounters, from the association of Aristotle with Alexander the Great to the crossing stars of Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle. One thinks, too, about the stars that might have crossed but somehow didn't. Alexis de Tocqueville and Karl Marx are such an unmet pair; so, too, are Nietzsche and Freud and, later, Freud and Einstein. Sometimes great men come close to meeting but the meeting does not come about. G. W. F. Hegel was not able to engage Napoleon in discourse after the Battle of Jena in 1806; all he could do was observe the conqueror from afar, reporting afterward to his colleagues at the University of Jena: "I just saw the Weltgeist riding on a white horse." And sometimes great men do meet, and the result is neither epochal nor disappointing but, instead, unclear and, perhaps, a bit puzzling. Such seems to have been the outcome of the meeting of Johann Sebastian Bach and Frederick the Great.

The encounter between Frederick II, king of Prussia, and Bach, the uncrowned king of music, promised to be momentous. It took place in Potsdam, a suburb of Berlin, on Sunday, May 12, 1747, and while the meeting of the two men had its significance, it did not develop into anything like the meeting of two great minds. Re-examined, the event turns out to lack the glamour with which Bach lore has endowed it.

King Frederick (at the time of Bach's visit not yet called Frederick the Great, a title he took on only after the end of the Seven Years War in 1763) had heard much about his visitor, but from the first he underrated him. He had no idea that he was to meet a musician who would achieve world reknown and retain it for centuries afterward, while his own name would recede into the proverbial mists of history. A monarch (even if an enlightened one) accustomed to playing God, whose life was daily taken up with decisions of world-shaking import, King Frederick ill concealed his usual prissy hauteur when meeting Bach, who to his mind was but a humble cantor.

For his part, Bach must have brought great expectations to his meeting with the king. No doubt he had hoped that his trip to Berlin would result in his winning Frederick's patronage—a hope that was to go unfulfilled. And even in the realm of music, Bach's trek to Potsdam turned out to be somewhat disappointing: he was to fail to improvise a six-voice fugue on a theme the king had given to him. Paradoxically, it was this very failure—or so Bach construed it to be—that provided him with the incentive, once returned to his native city of Leipzig, to create one of the greatest works of fugal wizardry of all time: the *Musical Offering*. Yet this work King Frederick pointedly ignored. He neither grasped its message nor sensed in its obsequious dedication Bach's plea for patronage. On the whole, Bach gave full value to his royal host but received little in return.

In retrospect, the hope of a productive rapport developing between Frederick and Bach was scant to begin with. Between the person-

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alities of the king and the composer there yawned an unbridgeable gulf. Bach and Frederick were antipodal, not only in their backgrounds but also in their philosophies of life, their religious convictions, and their musical tastes. Less like stars crossing paths, their meeting resembled the passing of two meteors from distinctly different galaxies.

Bach was a devout Christian and church musician. He was unflagging in his belief in God, whom he endlessly implored for mercy and redemption in his cantatas, passions, and motets. (Will Durant once suggested that, so prolix was Bach in his incantations, "he must have thought God a little hard of hearing.") Frederick, on the other hand, had scarcely any use for religion. At best he was a deist who shared the belief of many of his contemporaries that, after creating the universe, God had left its management to less competent hands. The king was thirty-five years old at the time of Bach's visit to Potsdam, and his mind had been swept up by the cold wind of rationalism. Voltaire, Holbach, and Diderot, the leading wedge of Enlightenment thinkers, had caught his fancy early. If Bach, as a musician, ministered to the soul's anguish, Frederick, as an adherent of La Mettrie's philosophy of *L'Homme machine*, was wont to deny that the soul existed. He disavowed Christianity and at one time even went so far as to forbid the playing of carillons from the church towers of Berlin and Potsdam.

Frederick has not been without his apologists. Many of these have praised him for his tolerance toward religious minorities, among them the French Huguenots. His critics, though, maintain that he was tolerant only so long as a group contributed to Prussia's prosperity. Unquestionably, he introduced reforms impressive for the time: among them a measure of freedom of the press and the prohibition of legal torture. Yet, in the words of Thomas Mann, "There was something cynical, arid, inhuman, misanthropic about him." He was feared, indeed hated, throughout Europe. The empress Maria Theresa of Austria, Frederick's arch-foe, was said never to have mentioned his name. When mention needed to be made of him, she would grow red in the face and refer to him only as "that man." Frederick is famous for having befriended Voltaire. But Voltaire—himself no angel—feared the king's icy cynicism and the potential for deviousness in a man who once declared: "If I thought my shirt knew my secrets, I would tear it off."

Bach, meanwhile, has always been given an extraordinarily fine press. Although he could be crustily recalcitrant when he believed his rights were being infringed upon, nearly everyone who had dealings with him noted his warmth, humility, and bonhomie. Every note of music he wrote expresses this—and he wrote millions of notes—and gives voice to his Christian credo of compassion, decency, and unflagging confidence in God's wisdom. In his life he practiced what he preached in his music: a reverence for God and for human goodness.

Despite the glaring differences in their personalities and philosophies, Bach and Frederick shared a love for music. Bach's passion for music goes without saying. But in Frederick's busy life—he once complained that a twenty-four-hour workday was not long enough—music had a very special place. He loved the flute and pursued his interest in the instrument with a doggedness that almost raised him to the status of a professional flutist. Musically, Frederick loved "art galant," an easy, pleasing melodism. Before the Seven Years War (1756–63) absorbed all his energies, Frederick had written more than a hundred flute sonatas and concerti in this style. These compositions were often only outlined by the king and then completed in harmonic detail by one of his many court musicians. Still, they are of a piece in that in all of them one voice assumes supremacy and is provided with a subservient harmonic understructure. When one listens to one of Frederick's concerti or sonatas, one hears chiefly the assertive flute part carrying the melody—the commanding voice of the king as uncontestedly dominant in his music as it was on the parade ground.

Frederick's monophonic, melody-dominated style was in sharp contrast to Bach's erudite fugal art. If Frederick's music can be taken as a metaphor of monarchical absolutism, Bach's music, with its interweaving multiple melodic strands, metaphorically expressed the ideal of a more pluralistic, religiously oriented society. Bach's choruses—"we" songs in contrast to the "I" songs that patrons of music and the populace at large had increasingly come to favor—were like the choruses of a Greek tragedy,

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giving voice to the hopes and the fears of the people.

If Bach wrote music to *pray* by, Frederick wrote (and loved) music to *play* by. Certainly he considered the Leipzig master's intricate fugues archaic, and he dismissed chorales as "dumb stuff." As did so many of his contemporaries, he typecast Bach as a creator of *musica sacra* and was unaware that the devout cantor had also written an ample opus of secular works, superior in their lighthearted charm and in their sublime subtlety to anything the art galant school was to produce.

But if King Frederick rejected Bach's music as outdated, he must have been impressed by reports of Bach's fabled prowess as a virtuoso whose fugal improvisations entranced his audiences. Bach's legendary feats were well known in Berlin, where he had many admirers. In addition, a close link existed between the court at Potsdam and the Bach ménage at Leipzig. Since 1740 Bach's second son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, had been Frederick's principal accompanist on the harpsichord. Also, a number of Bach's pupils had become members of the royal orchestra, and they were apt to speak glowingly of their master in Leipzig. These reports piqued Frederick's curiosity. He repeatedly mentioned to Bach's son that he would one day like to meet his father, yet he did not officially invite the senior Bach to visit the Prussian court.

Although Bach had been repeatedly apprised of the king's wish to meet him, he had other commitments that caused him to postpone the trip. The journey from Leipzig to Berlin was an onerous undertaking—a week-long trip over a hundred miles of wretched roads, dotted with more wretched inns. When he finally set out on this journey, Bach was sixty-two—quite old by the standards of a day when people considered themselves fortunate to reach forty. Still in full possession of his intellectual powers, sturdy if somewhat jowly in appearance, Bach was in far from perfect health. A lifelong obsessive worker who labored late into the night by bleary candlelight, he was approaching total blindness. (Two and a half years after his trip to Potsdam, Bach would entrust himself to the quack London oculist John Taylor, who, while traveling through Leipzig, "couched" Bach's cataracts; because asepsis was unknown, infection set in after these operations, which undoubtedly hastened Bach's death in 1750.) On his way to Potsdam, because of the rather fragile state of his health, Bach made a detour to Halle, some twenty miles to the north, to have his oldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, join him on this arduous journey.

Although Bach had traveled often and had derived obvious pleasure from doing so, his trips were generally of brief compass. He never left German soil, and his entire career unfolded within a perimeter of roughly two hundred miles; he moved in narrower confines than any other prominent figure in the history of music. The wonder is that Bach, in some ways the very prototype of the provincial, became the most universal of musicians and, in reputation, outdistanced all his globe-trotting contemporaries.

Much of his travel was undertaken to supply technical advice. Since Bach was recognized as a great expert in organ construction and acoustics, he often visited neighboring towns to inspect and dedicate new instruments. Various receipts in Bach's hand attest to his having received his fee, his travel expenses, and usually a generous allowance for wine consumed on his trip. With his large household, Bach could scarcely be other than mindful of money, however anomalous this may seem in a man whom, because of his music, we tend to think of as otherworldly. But as Bach's musical compositions were impeccably balanced, so, too, were his account books. Charles Sanford Terry, the British music historian, has observed that Bach "managed his household with the precision of a fugue."

When he concertized or staged cantatas at princely courts and the estates of the wealthy, money was not Bach's sole incentive. He also craved titles, even if they were only honorary, and he coveted them not for snobbish reasons alone. During Bach's Leipzig years—between 1723 and 1750—he was embroiled in almost perpetual altercations with his superiors. In the conduct of this bureaucratic warfare, titles and connections had a useful function: they made him appear more powerful than he actually was. "Don't tamper with Bach," his superiors would pronounce. "He has noble connection." Bach flaunted his court titles in the hope of silencing his antagonists. Thus, in 1733, in the course of petitioning Frederick Augustus, the elector of Saxony (later to be-

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come Augustus III, king of Poland), Bach sets out plainly the use that titles had for him:

> For some years past I have exercised the directorium of music in the two principal churches in Leipzig—a situation in which I have been constantly exposed to undeserved affronts and annoyances, not likely to occur should your Majesty be pleased to admit me to your capella and a predicat [title] to be issued to this effect.

To sweeten his plea and prove his competence, Bach attached to his petition the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* sections of the Holy Mass that were to form the nucleus of the *Mass in B Minor* (which would be completed only at the very close of his life).

Given Bach's need for money and desire for titles, it is unlikely that he would have set out for Potsdam without the hope of receiving one or the other—preferably both—from King Frederick. At this stage of his life, to be able to secure the endorsement of this mighty monarch would have been no small accomplishment for Bach. He had endured years of bitter bondage in Leipzig, where he had worked zealously but with scant recognition. Although some of his confreres applauded him, they applauded him as a technical expert, not as the bounteously sentient and gifted musician he was.

Extraordinary though his humility was, Bach was still human and, hence, not without the need for praise. The chance of scoring a success at King Frederick's court, which was rapidly rising as one of the great musical centers of Europe, must have loomed prominently in Bach's mind. This was a place where, in one visit, he could enhance his fame and his fortune and gain a measure of recognition that had thus far eluded him. All his life he had worked with endless dedication, and the lack of plaudits from those he served must have been especially chafing to him.

When Bach arrived at the Potsdam castle—not the famed chateau of Sans Souci, which at the time was not yet occupied by the court, but the Stadtschloss (town castle), which was destroyed by bombs in World War II—it was as if he had come unexpectedly. The king, we know, was surprised, even if pleasantly so, to find Bach's name on the list of travelers that the post coach had set down that day in the city. There is no indication that any special reception was planned for Bach, and it seems doubtful that any particular efforts at hospitality were made for him. The chroniclers of the event—Bach's own sons—would have been keen to report them.

As Bach entered the music room of the Berlin Stadtschloss, he found himself in a rather tense atmosphere. Frederick considered his evening concerts a serious matter. He ran them as he ran everything else—imperiously. Invariably he was the soloist of the evening. Comments on his playing—even favorable ones—were forbidden. Even Johann Joachim Quantz, Frederick's teacher and adored flute master, seems to have been cowed into silence; if he heard the king play a wrong note, he made his criticism in the form of a discrete cough. Once Quantz coughed so frequently that the king remarked crossly, "What are we to do about Quantz's cold?"

Upon hearing of Bach's arrival, Frederick canceled the evening's scheduled musical program. He obviously wished to make the most of his encounter with the Leipzig master. Hence, he commanded that Bach and his son Wilhelm Friedemann be rushed to the castle, even though they had arrived only a short time before at Carl Philipp Emanuel's home. Not only was Bach given no time to prepare for his audience with the king, he was not even able to change from his traveling clothes into his formal cantor's coat. Tired and travel-weary, Bach found himself ushered into the midst of Frederick's fashionably attired court. Embarrassed by his inappropriate dress, the greatest musical genius of the age offered prolix apologies for his shabby appearance.

Never a man to waste time on amenities or wardrobe—Frederick himself was a notoriously careless dresser—the king appraised his visitor with an icy eye and instantly took control. After a brief introduction, the king took Bach on a tour of various rooms where his recently acquired Silbermann pianofortes were on view. These were a source of great pride to Frederick. (J. N. Forkel, one of Bach's biographers, tells us that Frederick had purchased fifteen of these extraordinary instruments; to this day, two are still preserved in Potsdam.) Frederick was eager to have Bach play these pianofortes so that he could judge their quality.

One has to imagine a country gentleman showing off his fine stable of horses to a

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famous trainer to grasp the true picture of King Frederick marching Johann Sebastian Bach from room to room in his castle to test each of his new, elegant acquisitions. Bach readily acceded to the king's wish. With the members of the orchestra and court in tow, he examined each of Frederick's pianofortes, and on each he played an "unpremeditated composition," which quite thrilled the king's entourage.

But Bach had not made the long journey to give such a fragmentary impression of his art, especially on an instrument about which he had, on previous occasions, expressed some reservations. Rather he was eager to present Frederick with a full demonstration of his virtuosity as well as a fine sampling of his widely hailed genius at improvisation. In order to stage such a demonstration, according to Bach's own report, "the king deigned to play a theme for a fugue on the clavier," and his guest was invited to develop that theme on the spot. Apparently without the least hesitation, Bach took up the challenge, developing the theme Frederick had given him into a two-voice fugue and adding new voices as he went along.

The audience, we learn from a report in a Berlin newspaper of the time, was "seized with astonishment," and Frederick himself admired "the learned manner in which the subject was executed." Whether the king was able to admire more than Bach's "learned manner" is quite doubtful. If he appreciated the intellectual intricacy of Bach's exercise, he could scarcely have grasped the powerful spiritual dimension in the music. Frederick's ear was attuned to a style whose goal, whose raison d'etre, was the production of endearing, supple melodies. On this score, Bach was not prepared to oblige. No doubt Frederick admired Bach's performance in much the same manner as he would have admired the tricks of an ingenious juggler who had honed his skills to perfection.

Since there seemed indeed no limit to Bach's dexterity, Frederick demanded an even more difficult feat of him: he asked Bach to develop the royal theme into a six-part fugue. Even for Johann Sebastian Bach, this was a perplexing assignment. As Douglas R. Hofstadter, in his book *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, points out, to improvise a six-part fugue is, on an intellectual level alone, a task as forbidding as "playing sixty simultaneous games of chess—blindfolded." Bach himself, in his dedication to the finished composition, was to note: "I noticed very soon that for the lack of necessary preparation the execution of the task did not fare as well as such an excellent theme demanded." This was Bach's diplomatic and roundabout way of saying that he had deftly substituted for the royal theme a theme of his own devising—one more suitable for carrying out the challenge that the king had set forth. Yet so subtly had Bach accomplished this that neither Frederick nor the musicians present noticed the slight subterfuge, so totally taken were they by the sheer virtuosity of the performance. But Bach himself felt that he had shortchanged the king: he had not truly delivered the six-part fugue on the royal theme that Frederick had requested. Perfectionist incarnate that he was, he was irked by the burden of his own guilt. And so, while still in Potsdam, he announced his intent to make amends: a contemporary newspaper announced that Herr Bach would develop a six-part fugue on Frederick's theme and have it printed at his own expense.

Upon his return to Leipzig, Bach immediately applied himself to his task. This was characteristically Bachian behavior. His mind, utterly exacting and always punctilious, could not tolerate lapses or incompletions. Time and again the student of Bach's life will note his intense dislike of the fragmentary, of the half-completed, which was the obverse side of his vaunting ambition to round out his works and make them encyclopedic in scope. *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Goldberg Variations*, and the great Passions are stellar instances of Bach's striving for completion, of saying the last word and delivering a great "summa." He was a man who could do nothing halfway.

As Bach set to work on his gift to King Frederick (and an interesting note here is that in German *Musikalisches Opfer* connotes an offering to expiate for a misdeed, not a mere gift as *offering* seems to imply), a monumental structure evolved: two mighty fugues denoted by the somewhat old-fashioned term *ricercars* ("search pieces"), a three-part ricercar at the beginning and the promised six-part fugue at the end. Between these fugues, confining the work like majestic pillars, Bach added five canons on each side—musical acrostics or

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ingenious puzzles—the effect of which was to tease the listener to catch the king's theme unfolding in endless variations. The center of the *Musical Offering*, as the composition now came to be called, is taken up by a trio sonata for flute and continuo (harpsichord and bass). On this trio sonata Bach lavished his talent at its greatest power, for it was meant as a special tribute to the king, who loved the flute above all instruments. The result was, in the words of Wilfrid Mellers in his recent book *Bach and the Dance of God*, "one of Bach's most sublime compositions, achieving his typical equilibrium between the physical and the metaphysical." As promised, Bach had the whole work printed at his own expense. The dedication is dated July 7, 1747, showing that this compositional tour de force *sans pareil* was completed in less than two months after the Potsdam meeting.

Yet such extraordinary fugal ingenuity fell, in the case of King Frederick, not so much on deaf as on insensitive ears. Seen in retrospect, it now seems clear that the king would never take the time to puzzle out the ingenious musical acrostics that Bach had so painstakingly devised for him. In his dedication accompanying the composition, Bach remarked that he hoped the king would "deign to dignify this modest labor with gracious acceptance." Frederick's complete lack of response was far from gracious; Frederick deigned to accept nothing. The record shows no gesture of appreciation on the king's part. There is no evidence that Bach was presented with any monetary reward of the kind that royal music lovers customarily bestowed on artists visiting their courts. Not even an honorary title as court composer—surely a pittance of patronage in those years—was offered to Bach after the *Musical Offering* reached Potsdam.

Still, even if the absence of any response from King Frederick marked the trip to Potsdam largely as a failure, Bach, in his astute manner, was able to reap some benefits from it. He did not miss out on the opportunity to explore the *Musical Offering* as a publishing venture—and one that might yet bring him financial reward. He must doubtless have been aware that the royal theme suggested by King Frederick would give this composition a special cachet and stir an interest of a rather extraordinary kind. (As, in our day, the sale of a recent recording of Mozart's concerto for three pianos was undoubtedly enhanced by the fact that the then West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, played one of the piano parts.)

The most effective way for Bach to bring such a work as the *Musical Offering* to the public's attention was to have it printed and offered at the world-famous Leipzig Fair. It was essential that printed copies be on hand for the fair to be held in September 1747. Hence Bach had very practical reasons for flinging himself into the task of completing the *Offering:* he had to meet a deadline. To have copies ready by September, the engraving had to be done in haste, and a sloppy, error-ridden printing was the result. (Only in 1945 was the *Musical Offering*'s structural ingenuity restored and revealed anew by the music historian Hans T. David.)

Viewed strictly as a publishing venture, the *Musical Offering* was a modest success. Some copies of its first printing (a hundred copies were printed) were sent by Bach to his friends and fellow musicians to apprise them of his latest work and, at the same time, to impress them with the fact that he had been received by the mighty Frederick of Prussia. The remaining copies sold quickly, Bach reported. He was satisfied with his handiwork and referred proudly to it as his "Prussian Fugue."

After the first printing was exhausted, Bach planned a second one. We know that when Johann Elias Bach, his second cousin and, in years past, a highly esteemed member of his Leipzig ménage, asked for a copy of the *Musical Offering*, Bach replied, in a letter we have in his own hand, that the first printing was now gone but that new copies were expected around Christmastime. Bach added: "If Herr Cousin then still desires to have a copy, you only have to give notice by mail and add a thaler. The request shall then be complied with." The mention of the thaler ought not to be overlooked. Even if Bach wrote music that reached empyrean heights, he was not apt to neglect earthly practicalities.

Frederick, as far as we know, paid no further heed to his visitor. Years later and somewhat confusedly he recalled the Bachs in a talk with the Austrian diplomat Gottfried van Swieten. He intoned the royal theme, but made no mention of the *Musical Offering*.

After Bach died in 1750, the performance of

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his works came to an almost complete halt, and most of his compositions were all but forgotten. In the second half of the eighteenth century, if "the Great Bach" was mentioned, it was probably a reference to Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. Nonetheless, some of Bach's works were kept alive through copies made by the Leipzig master's faithful students—many of whom had settled in Berlin because they were attracted by King Frederick's ventures in opera and the reputation of his court orchestra. Not only were Bach's faithful students there, and the students of their students in the next generation, but, as the nineteenth century dawned, Germany's romantic movement was centered in Berlin. Among its other manifestations, romanticism brought with it a renewed interest in vocal art and, especially, in the German song. Groups of amateur vocalists met in Berlin homes for lieder singing and choral performances, and it was in these circles that Bach's works—in particular his motets—were again studied and performed.

But the Bach revival received its greatest boost in 1800, when Carl Friedrich Zelter, a highly respected composer of lieder and a close friend of Goethe, became conductor of the Berlin Singakademie. Zelter, it turns out, was an inveterate Bach enthusiast and a collector of Bachiana. (He is said to have bought the manuscript of the *Saint Matthew Passion* when it was offered as wrapping paper in the auction of the estate of a deceased cheesemonger.) Zelter inspired his pupil, the young Felix Mendelssohn, to study Bach, and Mendelssohn reacted with passionate enthusiasm. Such was the strength of Mendelssohn's feeling for Bach's music that, at only twenty years of age, along with his friend, the actor Edward Devrient, he persuaded Zelter to permit them to stage Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion* at the Singakademie. Its performance under Felix Mendelssohn on March 11, 1829, one hundred years to the day after its premiere in Leipzig under Bach himself, proved an epochal event. It set in motion a Bach revival that swept Germany and eventually all of Europe.

It is paradoxical, and yet somehow fitting, that the Bach revival began in Berlin, the capital of the monarch who had, eighty-odd years before, all but snubbed Bach in Potsdam and disregarded his offering. Yet Frederick, by making Berlin a city of great musical culture, had thereby helped lay the groundwork for the eventual enshrinement of Johann Sebastian Bach. How subtle history can be!

In a footnote to this story of the relationship of Bach and Frederick, it is worth pointing out that one of the members of the audience at the 1829 performance of the *Saint Matthew Passion*, and a most enthusiastic one, was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Perhaps he could have accounted for how such things come about. The rest of us are left to wonder and to be grateful that Bach's sublime music has survived.

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Aunt Ida's Last Evasion

DAVID BERGMAN

Home for Christmas, I
visit my great aunt
Ida in the hospital.
I had grown that fall
a large scholarly beard
that stretched
like a dark smile
from ear to ear.
My mother goes in first
to set the stage, shakes
my aunt's arm grown
thin as a spider
in a web of tubing
and whispers, "Look
who's here to see you."
And turning to the door,
my aunt screams, "MY GOD,
IT'S THE ANGEL OF DEATH,"
but in Yiddish, "MEIN GOTT,
MEIN GOTT," over and over
no matter how hard
we explain. A week later
she's dead; by her own orders
attended by only clean
shaven men, a final ruse
to trick the demon
of the shtetl.
Foolish really, to think
he'd give up so easily
after coming all the way
to Worcester, Massachusetts
to get her. It takes
a dubbyk, how long?
maybe a week or two at most
to grow his whiskers back.

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Edward Kennard Rand

ARTHUR F. STOCKER

Edward Kennard Rand, professor of Latin at Harvard University for more than a third of a century (1909–42), was one of the few men with whom I have ever been associated whom I should describe as truly great. He was a prodigious scholar; a bibliography of his writings would include more than two hundred items. He held the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from four universities, including Harvard itself, and the degree of Doctor of Laws from two more. The University of Paris, in recognition of his scholarship and his lifelong devotion to France, awarded him posthumously (December 15, 1945) the degree of Docteur de l'Université. He was a corresponding fellow, or member, of numerous learned societies abroad, and at home was a member of the American Philosophical Society, and past president of both the American Philological Association and the Mediaeval Academy of America.

His was not, however, greatness of the usual kind. Unlike a Wolf or a Lachmann, he displayed no striking new insights that changed the course of classical scholarship. He left no definitive edition of any Latin author, as Cyril Bailey did of Lucretius or Arthur Stanley Pease, his colleague at Harvard, did of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* and of the fourth book of Vergil's *Aeneid*. He was a splendid teacher, though perhaps no better than others under whom I worked. What invested him with authentic greatness was his unusual character, what in Latin would be termed his *magnanimitas*. The intellectual and spiritual values of the ancient and medieval worlds that he knew and loved might almost be said to have become incarnate in him. What he studied and taught, he also exemplified, and he became for me something like one of Plato's everlasting forms, an ideal of social and intellectual virtues that one could only approach by mimesis, without hope ever of completely attaining them.

"EKR," as he was known to his associates (only his closest friends ever called him "Ken"), was a representative product of old New England: his father's family was descended from Francis Rand, one of the founders of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and his mother's from George Abbott and George Allen, early settlers in Massachusetts, Rowley and Saugus respectively. His father was a Congregational minister, who subsequently turned to the Episcopal church—"attracted," his son later wrote, "by its greater freedom and its beautiful rites." In his adult life Rand himself traveled a step further down that road, becoming a faithful communicant and a member of the Corporation in Boston's Parish of the Advent, a church aptly described as just "a little lower than the angels," with most of the ritual splendor and ecclesiastical formalism of old-time Roman Catholicism. He remained devoted to this church all his life, and its rector, the Reverend Whitney Hale—"Father Hale," to the Rands—was a frequent guest in his house. Rand had passed the offering plate at the Church of the Advent on the morning of the day he died.

As one of five children in the home of a minister, at a time when men of the cloth were compensated largely by the esteem of the community where they lived and rather meagerly with cash, he was educated in the public schools of Watertown, and finally at the high school of which George R. Dwelley (Harvard, 1853) was principal. He graduated first in a class from which "only a handful," he remi-

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nisced half a century later, "were trying for college, and, knowing the risk, we did more than was necessary." Harvard seemed financially beyond his reach, but on the advice of friends, which was quite realistic in those uncomplicated days, he presented himself on opening day, not at the office of some director of student aid, but at the home of the university president himself, whose doorbell he rang. Charles William Eliot came to the door. Young Rand told him his plight, and the president personally made the arrangements for him to enter Harvard.

With scholarships and by tutoring he worked his way through college and graduated in 1894 summa cum laude, his A.B. further embellished with honors in Classics and honorable mention in Greek, Latin, and philosophy. He was elected secretary of the class of 1894, a position that he filled with great loyalty and zest to the time of his death. At the commencement exercises he delivered the Latin salutatory, so making his first appearance on the podium from which so often during the next fifty years his rolling Latin periods were to be launched. His oration in Latin at the time of Harvard's tercentenary observances in 1936 was one of the high points of that notable occasion.

In later years Rand was disposed to take a rather dim view of the elective system through which he had passed at Harvard, associated particularly with the name of his benefactor, President Eliot. One of his last writings, after he had become an emeritus professor, was an article in the June 1943 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, bearing the title, "Bring Back the Liberal Arts," in which he decried the plethora of free electives that even then characterized, as of course they now do much more, the curriculum leading toward a baccalaureate degree. "Some of us were inhibited," he wrote, "by the very bounties of the banquet from devising menus of our own." Withal, however, he described his four undergraduate years at Harvard as "a great awakening."

Not unnaturally, his first inclination was toward theology, his father's profession, and in 1894 he entered the Harvard Divinity School. The course from which he derived the greatest stimulation, he told his Harvard classmates on the occasion of their fiftieth reunion, was a "seminary" in scholastic philosophy under George Santayana. So, very early in his career, he was drawn toward the field in which he was later to make so substantial a contribution, the relation between the classical Greco-Roman world and the world in which the fathers of the Church both thought and wrote.

During the next three years (1895–98), Rand's course for the future lay very much uncharted. He had had no graduate training in Classics, and his teaching experience was limited to a little private tutoring he had done when he was in college and to instructing at a small summer school in Seal Harbor, Maine. He was invited, however, to become a junior member of the Classics faculty at the University of Chicago, and in his second year there (1896–97) he was permitted to give a course on Classical Culture in the Middle Ages, which he modeled on one he had taken at Harvard under the eminent Arthur Richmond Marsh. The experience established in his thinking "the subject of Christian humanism, of the relation between pagan culture and Christian faith" as "a dominant issue for life." The call of the Church was still strong for him; during the 1897–98 academic year he was granted a leave of absence from the University of Chicago and spent it at the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge. Although ultimately he opted for the gown over the cloth, the call of the Church did not go unheeded. It was to the promotion of Christianity, resting (as he saw it) on the firm foundation of Greco-Roman culture, that he devoted his life, albeit in the halls of Academia rather than in the sanctuaries of worship.

When Rand returned to Chicago in the summer of 1898, he encountered Caspar René Gregory, and, as a junior member of the faculty, he took the great man's course in Greek paleography. Paleography was at this time just emerging as a fresh new field for classical scholarship, and, since most classical texts had come down from ancient to modern times through ecclesiastical channels, the study of paleography was related closely to what had just emerged for him as the "dominant issue for life." Rand made up his mind: it was into the world of scholarship that he would move, and since as early as the turn of the century the attainment of a Ph.D. had become essential for a man with serious aspirations to become a university teacher, he repaired to the

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University of Munich to work for his. On his way he spent some time in France, first at Tours, later in Paris. At both places he found a rich store of Latin manuscripts, which added fuel to his newfound interest in paleography.

At the University of Munich, Rand's best known teachers were Professors Wölfflin in Latin, von Christ in Greek, von Müller in pedagogy, and Fürtwangler in archaeology, but the greatest influence brought to bear upon him was that exerted by Ludwig Traube, an authentic pioneer in the field of Latin paleography. Traube introduced him to Father Ehrle, the prefect of the Vatican library, so that there, as earlier in Tours and at Paris, he was able to handle large numbers of Latin manuscripts and to greatly broaden his experience with them. While absorbing German *Wissenschaft,* he was able also to cultivate his taste for music and art, for the cool dark beer of Munich, and for many other amenities that Europe afforded to an American in the early years of the twentieth century. In November 1900 he passed with distinction his examination for the Ph.D. His thesis, "Der dem Boethius zugeschriebene Traktat *De Fide Catholica,*" was subsequently published in Fleckeisen's *Jahrbuch.* In the spring of 1901 he married Belle Brent Palmer, of Louisville, Kentucky, whom he is said to have courted on the hillsides surrounding Munich by reading her the poetry of Santayana; and in the fall of 1901 he returned to Cambridge to assume a faculty instructorship in Latin at Harvard. He remained a member of that faculty, with only occasional short leaves of absence, until his retirement in 1942, by which time he had become Pope Professor of Latin.

My personal acquaintance with Rand began in the fall of 1934 and continued during the last ten years of his life. To begin with, the eyes through which I viewed him were those of a very young graduate student, and as an unsophisticate I saw him merely as one of that largely undifferentiated mass of "faculty," among whom even the distinctions of academic rank were not readily apparent. It soon became clear, however, that he was no ordinary man: handsome, gray haired, always impeccably groomed, serene and seemingly imperturbable, with a finely modulated voice and a delicate sense for *le mot juste*; when he came before any of his larger classes as a lecturer, his appearance had about it something of the nature of an epiphany. I remember particularly one day when he arrived in full morning dress to teach a class of thirty or forty advanced undergraduates and beginning graduate students, having undoubtedly left a tall hat somewhere back in the department office. Rumor had it that he was on his way to a board meeting after class with some very proper Bostonians and that he would not have had time to return home and dress between engagements. No one, of course, was so impertinent as to comment on his unusual appearance, or even to appear to notice it.

In seminars he was naturally closer to his students. He did not hold himself aloof. In fact, he was more accessible than many of his colleagues. Advanced students had what was almost a standing invitation to the Sunday afternoon teas, for which he and his wife were "at home" nearly every week. His courtesy was unfailing, even toward students who for one reason or another must have been disappointing to him. Familiarity, however, was unthinkable. Of any course he gave, at whatever level, he was always clearly in command. Even in seminars, when the discussion ranged widely, we always felt that by his guidance we had come at the end of the period to a destination he had clearly had in mind.

The seminar in which I am sure he took the greatest pleasure was the one in Latin paleography. He was, if not a pioneer like Traube, at least one of an early group of scholars to win recognition in that field; and when I took the seminar, he had just completed his monumental *Studies in the Script of Tours.* Speaking as one with authority, not as one of the scribes, he introduced us to such esoterica as the hair-side and the flesh-side of parchment, pinpricks, and rulings that were "old-style" and "new-style"; all these minutiae he was able to invest with larger meaning as aspects of medieval culture, in which he saw the bridge between the world of Vergil and Horace, Lactantius and Jerome, and the world in which both he and we were living. A great deal of this passed over the heads of his more single-minded students, who were still trying to grasp things so elementary as the different forms of the letters *e* and *g* that indicated the date and provenience of Latin manuscripts. Our preference at the time, and perhaps even our immediate best interests, might have

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been better served by something more mechanical and utilitarian. As his pupil Bernard M. Peebles was later to put it, however, in a fine tribute paid to him after his death: "Rand, following Traube's teachings, did not view palaeography as a discipline to be practiced strictly in its own right, but as one element to be combined with textual criticism and history (including that of literature) to yield an instrument of study adequate to the demands of literary and historical scholarship."

It was to the science of Latin paleography, thus broadly conceived, that Rand made what was probably his greatest substantive contribution. "From pin-pricks," as Peebles observes, "to the Rome of Boethius and Dante is a wide gap, but Rand's broad range of sympathies and skills could bridge it." He was a man of prodigious learning, but the data stored in his mind were never an end in themselves; they were components in what was for him the developing concept of an *urbs aeterna*, a community of civilized men, with attitudes and outlooks that had taken shape in ancient Greece and Rome, and that, only slightly modified by the superimposition of Christianity upon them, had passed down through the Middle Ages to the Western world of the twentieth century.

Rand's second major contribution to scholarship was the study he directed toward the commentaries of Servius on Vergil. These exist in a considerable number of manuscripts as old as the ninth century, betokening their wide currency in the Middle Ages. They have come down, however, in two distinct forms, one substantially longer than the other. From the time when this difference was recognized, about 1600, the question always has been the relationship between the two: Is the longer-form Servius augmented, or is the shorter-form Servius abridged? Rand was by no means the first scholar to address himself to these and related questions, but a highly significant article he wrote in 1916—suggesting that the additional material in the longer Servius might derive from the lost commentary of Aelius Donatus on Vergil, and that Servius himself must have drawn freely upon it in antiquity—although perhaps mistaken in some of its implications, focused fresh attention on the problem and led to the organization of a team of scholars under his guidance to construct a new edition of Servius. The virtue of the new edition (only two volumes of which, in a projected series of five, have as yet appeared) is that, based on a much wider and more sophisticated selection of manuscripts than any of its predecessors, it shows the reader very nearly at a glance, by an ingenious manipulation of typefaces and arrangement of columns on the page, just what text belongs to each version of the commentary. Earlier editors, accepting the greater authority of one or the other, had tended to base their text mainly on that one, giving short editorial shrift to the other.

I had written my doctoral dissertation under Rand's direction on a small aspect of the Servius problem. Subsequently he did me the honor of inviting me to become a member of his editorial team, along with Fordham's John Joseph Hannan Savage, Catholic University's Bernard Mann Peebles, and J. Petersen Elder, who later became Harvard's distinguished dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. At frequent intervals Rand used to get all, or as many as possible, of the editors together for lunch at Harvard University's Faculty Club, where we would discuss matters of editorial policy and share whatever new insights might have come to any of us. On one such occasion, basking in the glow of Rand's suave *urbanitas*, I was offered and smoked my first cigar—a fast-burning, flat, rather mild cigar, which, however, had all the body necessary to provide the potential for considerable embarrassment to a man who had never smoked a cigar before. I was luckier than I deserved to be. My discomfort, though considerable, seemed entirely to escape the notice of my courteous host, although perhaps he was just giving me another example of his unfailing tact.

Room D, on the top floor of Harvard's Widener Library, was the paleography room, and most of the Serviana (including photographs of all the major manuscripts, collations, and assemblies) were stored in a walk-in closet opening off from that, which we called Widener D-prime. Nearly all of the work done on the first volume of the *Servius* by any of us, his junior collaborators, was accomplished in this room. Rand himself occupied a study opening off the stacks, across a courtyard and one flight of stairs down from Widener D. He used to hang a card in his window to summon whoever might be working in Widener D at

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the time if some new thought came to him, and we would arrive at his sanctum to find voluminous notes on small slips of yellow paper, which he had written to each of us about whatever we were then working on. It is difficult to describe the relationship that existed between him and us. There was no question about his primacy, but we were never in any way made to feel our junior position. He always addressed and treated us as his genuine collaborators.

Rand was one of the principal founders of the Mediaeval Academy of America, which was incorporated on December 23, 1925. He was its first president and also the first editor-in-chief of its quarterly publication, *Speculum*, which came out for the first time in January 1926. Rand was at his witty best in the published presidential address, entitled "Mediaeval Gloom and Mediaeval Uniformity," which he delivered at the first meeting of the academy, in April 1926. By this time it already had a membership of 503. The bond that united the members of the academy at its inception was an interest in medieval Latin, and that was surely Rand's own interest. But, he wrote as editor of *Speculum*, "While Mediaeval Latin is still the centre of our interests, it is not the circumference." The new academy included in its purview the entire civilization of the Middle Ages, and before long as many historians—political, social, and economic—were numbered among its members as men of letters. The pages of *Speculum* were open to contributors of all shades of belief or point of view. They might, Rand wrote, "regard the Ages of Faith with adoration or with contempt," if only they had something new to offer about them.

Rand's presence, as well as his scholarship, made him very much in demand as a lecturer, and the books of his that are most widely read were the outgrowths of his public lectures. Shortly after the formation of the Mediaeval Academy of America, Rand delivered in Boston the Lowell lectures, which, in their published form, became his best known book, *Founders of the Middle Ages*. Much of what he said and wrote was admittedly special pleading. "The reader will soon become aware," he stated in his preface,

> of an attempt to defend the culture of the Church, and particularly of the form that it assumed in the West. . . . The views here represented are open to criticism at many points. . . . We are all bound by small horizons, and even our efforts to escape from one prejudice only land us in another. As Henry Osborn Taylor remarks in his Presidential Address (1927) before the American Historical Association, "To different succeeding ages the past will appear, and even *be*, different." From such considerations, it would seem advisable that the historian, in his interpretation of the past, should absorb the spirit of an epoch, so far as he can, before submitting it to the canons of criticism fashionable in his own day, and that, in applying these canons, he should put less trust in present-day judgments, however brilliantly or learnedly expressed, than in the abiding traditions of the past.

To a preeminent degree, this is what Rand achieved: he absorbed the spirit of the Middle Ages, with its curious blend of pagan classicism and Christian mysticism, and he interpreted it sensitively, on its own terms, to the alien culture that is our own. His prophecy that not everyone would endorse either his views or his approach was of course fulfilled. In a review of the book (*Times Literary Supplement*, March 14, 1929) it was observed: "The book is to be commended to every student of letters, but, in mentioning Dr. Rand as one of the finest classical scholars and humanists of our time, we may be permitted to add that we expect from him something more substantial than this book, or than his charming little introduction to Ovid [*Ovid and His Influence*, in the Our Debt to Greece and Rome series] which was published a year or two ago." *Quot homines, tot sententiae.*

In the phrontisteria of this world, as in Heaven, there are many mansions. In some dwell the discoverers of great truths hitherto unknown or unrecognized, in others live the miners of data, who gather and sort diverse bits of new information that become building blocks out of which the edifices of the future can later be constructed. Rand was capable of these kinds of scholarship, involving the most meticulous attention to detail, as his work on the manuscripts of Tours very well shows. An equally honorable place belongs, however, to those somewhat rarer folk who can range widely over a broad area of knowledge, and who from extensive personal experience in that field are able to make valid syntheses and to offer securely based interpretations. Rand's

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greatness derives from the firm grasp he had on classical Roman patterns of thought and the literature in which they are expressed, his sensitivity to all their nuances, the fact that a well-defined philosophy of Christian humanism underlay all his approaches, and the gift he had of an inexhaustible *copia verborum*, which enabled him to communicate his knowledge and insights not only to his professional colleagues but to cultivated laymen, as well. Justice Felix Frankfurter, who had known Rand when the jurist was on the faculty of the Harvard Law School, wrote on the occasion of Rand's retirement: "Not the least of my cherished Cambridge memories are the all too infrequent encounters with you. For I never left you without being refreshed and fortified."

His Norman Wait Harris Lectures at Northwestern University became *The Magical Art of Virgil*, a second set of Lowell lectures in 1942 became his last great book, *The Building of Eternal Rome*. After Rand had been Sather lecturer at the University of California, way back in 1919 and 1920, W. A. Merrill had written: "You can carry with you the conviction that your tenure of the Sather chair has been a glorious success. Certainly no one of your predecessors has been able to do all the desirable things that you have done—good lecturing, strenuous teaching, response to outside demands, good fellowship, and general exemplification of what a genuine human being who is also an accomplished Latinist should be."

Rand was himself most certainly a publishing scholar, but he would have recoiled vigorously from the vulgar modern dictum Publish or Perish. In April 1935 he wrote to Harvard's president, James B. Conant:

> As for publication, we should cease to regard it as a major criterion of scholarship. It is true that an inquiring and original mind—which is, of course, a prime essential—cannot help making fresh observations and fruitful discoveries, but it matters not whether he disseminates them on paper or in the intellects of his pupils. The latter way is "productive scholarship" combined with art. If a paper or a book is the outcome of his thought, well and good. If he prefers to wait till his thoughts mellow, all the better. If he never publishes at all, that is not necessarily against him. The possession of a keen and original mind can be told in a half hour's conversation. It is also easy to find out within a few years whether the possessor of such a mind is constantly improving it, or whether he is content with his own brilliance and the modicum of information necessary for his task. *In the Classics, I should rate higher that scholar who has made friends with the great authors of Greece and Rome, who steadily deepens his intimacy with them, and who can inspire his pupils with an eagerness to make the same friendship with them* [italics mine]. It is not incompatible with research in matters large or small—and that, too, is normally a prime essential for a permanent member of the Harvard staff.

Another mechanical test for scholarship upon which Rand had come to look askance was the Ph.D. oral examination. "I have for a long time had little faith," he wrote on June 21, 1933, "in our oral examinations; despite our best efforts, they seem to constitute a psychological rather than an intellectual test. . . . Even very good students have sometimes made a most miserable exhibition of themselves in the oral examination." Scholarship, for Rand, was a function of the spirit, and, like all spiritual gifts, it defied measurement in material terms.

At home as he might have felt in classical Rome or medieval Europe, he dwelt in no ivory tower of detachment. From his tongue, as from Nestor's, flowed speech sweeter than honey, and he took undisguised pleasure in the use of this instrument even for the delectation of what is usually so captious an audience as a college faculty. "I have enjoyed the Faculty debates," he confessed to his classmates at the time of their fiftieth reunion, "and have taken part in some, particularly one in which the Faculty rejected a vote of the Overseers to abolish the Latin Program, one in recent years when an attempt to remove the requirement of Latin for the A.B. was defeated, and one, largely attended, in which the Faculty, which had delegated its powers to a selected council for several years, voted by an imposing majority to resume its original functions."

Feelings about the council seem to have run high during the five years (spring of 1934 to fall of 1939) of its existence. The idea appears to have originated with President Conant, who soon after taking office suggested that the faculty might perhaps have become too large to be serviceable as a forum for debate. "Where the faculties are small," he wrote, "they function well as legislative bod-

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ies; where they are much larger than one hundred, their size, for many reasons, makes the transaction of business difficult." He suggested the constitution of a council of about sixty members, elected on some representative basis, and his thought was that, if provision were made in this body for rotation in office, essentially all the members of the larger faculties would have the opportunity to serve in the course of a few years. Such a council would then function "as all faculties did a generation ago, and the smaller faculties do today."

In a more tranquil period the scheme might have found readier acceptance. At about this time, however, certain administrative decisions had been made with respect to appointments and tenure that precipitated a storm of criticism, and the council seems to have been viewed by some as denying to substantial elements in the faculty their proper voice in the determination of policy. In the fall of 1939, after the council had been in operation for only a little more than five years, the faculty voted overwhelmingly to abolish it, and President Conant himself admitted that "there was some truth in the allegation that the absence of regular faculty meetings open to all had prevented some dissenters from airing their complaints." On this point the dissidents found an ally in Rand; he supported strongly the resumption by the faculty of its historic role. In view of his fondness for public speaking, however, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that what Rand really missed, during the period when the council governed, was the opportunity to display his conspicuous oratorical talents before a worthy assembly of his peers.

Supporting as Rand may have been of the democratic ideal of full participation by all the faculty in the governance of the university, he was vigorously at odds with some of the dissidents who had been the council's most articulate foes over the concept of a union of university teachers, which surfaced among a small segment of the Harvard faculty at this time. He saw in the emerging Cambridge Union of University Teachers, an affiliate of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), "a symbol of disloyalty and disrespect to the President and Governing Boards of Harvard University," and on April 6, 1939, he wrote to its director:

> Harvard has always stood for freedom. There is a recognized body, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, represented nowadays [*i.e.*, during the five-year period within which this letter was written] by its Council, to which suggestions . . . can be made at any time. I have been a member of the Faculty under three Presidents, and can testify that under none of these great men has there been anything like repression. On the other hand, debate has been free and open, with constant criticism of the policies of the President when anybody objects to them. There really is no tyranny to overthrow.

Rand made his influence felt outside the confines of the university as a conspicuous internationalist and advocate of American involvement in the two World Wars on the side of England and France. Preeminently he was a Francophile. This sentiment developed when he stopped at Tours and in Paris on his way to Munich in the winter of 1898–99, and it grew stronger with the passing of the years. In 1933–34, when he enjoyed a sabbatical leave from teaching at Harvard, he took intense pleasure in serving as exchange professor at the Sorbonne, both giving public lectures and taking part in the regular instruction that led to the *licence*. "No finer group of scholars and gentlemen exists," he wrote for his classmates at the reunion in 1944, "than the colleagues I learned to know there. We enjoyed the hospitality of households rich and poor, with everywhere the same good dinners, flowing with wit and wine, the same courteous cordiality and refinement of manners, and the same gay, French *esprit*. No wonder that I am firm in my conviction that, when the present blight has been brushed off, France will rise again, and, although in rags, again teach the world how to live."

Rand was a thoroughly sociable human being. Men from all fields of interest were drawn to him, as Felix Frankfurter once had been, by his gifts as a conversationalist. He derived great enjoyment from his membership in the Saturday Club of Boston, which had been founded by Ralph Waldo Emerson in the middle of the nineteenth century with the provision of a forum for good conversation as its particular raison d'être. Its meetings were held at the Union Club in Boston on the last Saturday of every month between September and May and on the Saturday before Harvard's commencement in June. Its membership over the years had included such men

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as Alexander Emanuel Agassiz, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Abbott Lawrence Lowell. So greatly did it flourish that it reportedly built up an endowment sufficient, for a time, at least, to provide its members with free luncheons.

Rand also derived satisfaction from his membership in the Harvard Signet Society, which was primarily an undergraduate literary and artistic club, usually numbering among its members such people as the editors of the *Crimson* and the *Lampoon* and occasionally electing members from the faculty. In the twenties and thirties Harvard luminaries such as John Livingston Lowes, George Lyman Kittredge, and Charles Hall Grandgent, along with Rand, were fairly regular participants in its activities. In 1942, the year of his retirement, the Signet Society awarded Rand its medal for achievement in the arts.

He carried on an extensive correspondence with his friends, his colleagues at other institutions, and his students, much of which he kept in files that happily are still preserved in the Archives of Harvard University. I was rather touched, when I was afforded access to these, to find one file labeled, "Stocker, Arthur F." The letters give striking evidence of his loyalty to his friends, the genuine concern he felt for the welfare of his students, and the charity that was in his heart toward all. One of the most voluminous of these files contained correspondence with and about a graduate student of his who could only be described as a conspicuous failure: he had been unsuccessful in his first two teaching positions, his personality was quite obviously flawed, and finally he had become a psychiatric patient. The letters Rand wrote to him were models of tact. Never was there more than oblique reference to the young man's serious problems, although the existence of these problems was clearly recognized. Such advice as he gave was always positive and forward-looking.

Rand's personal interests and outlooks were not, of course, widely shared by other men, but he moved easily among them, the object always of their liking and respect. In the record of the Harvard Class of 1894 at its fortieth reunion, he is described as "always esoteric, and usually unintelligible." In educational matters, he was conservative to the point of reaction. In the article already mentioned, which he wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly* in June 1943, he argues for the restoration after the war of both Greek and Latin to a central place in the school and college curriculum, with mathematics, science, French, German, history, and English in supporting roles. He stood firmly behind the requirement, maintained at Harvard until after World War II, that doctoral dissertations in classical philology be written in Latin—"a requirement," he wrote in 1933 to Professor W. A. Nitze, of the University of Chicago, "to which we shall hold *per omnia saecula saeculorum*. It is a symbol of the need of art as well as science in the elaboration of a thesis, and *ipso facto* precludes the inordinate length of theses in some other Departments." A critic, however, once said: "You may think, as I do, that some of his notions of education are either outmoded or unhappily impossible. But at the same time you will hope that, somehow or other, education will continue to produce just such men as he."

Julius Caesar, a man like E. K. Rand, fond of good food and good company, dined, we are told by his biographer Suetonius, the night before the fateful ides of March, with his friend Marcus Lepidus. Conversation at the dinner party took a philosophical turn and touched on the question of what might be the best sort of death. "Let it come swiftly and unexpectedly," were the words of Caesar.

To E. K. Rand death came, if not entirely unexpectedly, at least swiftly. "I am not in the best of physical condition," he had written to his friend Jerome D. Green as early as June 17, 1940, "having a little trouble with angina." "My doctor charges me," he wrote on another occasion, "to avoid as many stirring affairs as possible." On Saturday, October 27, 1945, he attended a luncheon meeting of his beloved Saturday Club, and a friend, driving him back to Cambridge from Boston, left him at the foot of a hill leading up to his home on Lake View Avenue. "Belza," he told his wife on arriving there, "the walk was too much for me. I thought I could not make it." A neighbor later told Mrs. Rand that she had seen him stagger, and had thought about rushing out to help him, but that he had seemed to recover. That night he was better; he joked, as usual, at dinner with his grandnephew.

On Sunday morning, as was his wont, he passed the offering plate at the Church of the Advent. Friends had been invited to his house

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in the late afternoon for one of the Rands' Sunday afternoon teas. Between events, in the middle of the day, he sat down at his desk to work on what was to be his 1945 Christmas card. For many years he had been accustomed to design his own, with some photograph that he himself had taken and an appropriate Latin quotation, comment, or greeting imprinted. The 1945 card was to carry a photograph of the Church of Saint Pierre at Caen, taken by Rand years before the damage that the church had undergone during World War II, and a Christian blessing from the Sacramentarian of Angoulême. Mrs. Rand came in and exchanged a few words with him in a vein that was entirely normal. Ten minutes later she found him dead in his chair.

I like to think, as I am sure he thought (for he was a man of profound religious faith), that an uncommonly great soul had been released from the prison-house of the body and had gone to dwell with Vergil and Horace and Ovid, with Lactantius and Jerome and Boethius, in that *urbs aeterna*, the *civitas Dei*, to the contemplation of which he had devoted so much of his life.

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The Natural History of British Cookery Books

ALAN DAVIDSON

In many countries, when motorcars throng the roads during the holiday season, the authorities put up signs to indicate alternative routes, bypassing the best known and most frequented places along the way. Similarly, I shall steer clear, or almost clear, of some of the cookery writers on whom much—and in some instances excessive—attention has already been lavished and will instead conduct a tour along secondary roads, introducing not-so-famous authors whose importance has been underestimated.

The point of departure is clear. *The Forme of Cury,* a vellum roll on which are written the recipes of the chef of King Richard II, belongs to the very end of the fourteenth century and is the first work on cookery in the English language. It is not, naturally, a purely English work. What C. Anne Wilson, the historian of English food, has called, in a recent article, "the French connection" is fully apparent. But the terms of Norman origin that are to be found in it are intermingled with others of Saxon derivation, and its claim to be the first English cookery book is indisputable and undisputed, despite the lapse of time (about three centuries) before it appeared in printed form.

The first printed cookery book in the English language was composed between 1470 and 1480 and printed in 1500, a conveniently memorable date. There is one known copy of this book, in the library of one of the great country houses in England. When I last visited this house, the librarian, perceiving that I was unoccupied while my friend went about her business, casually passed it to me as something with which to while away the time. The sensations that pervaded me as I turned over its crisp, almost mint, pages were of my native Celtic intensity, although I preserved a properly English appearance of calm. The book is called simply the *Noble Boke off Cookry.* Robina Napier, who edited a printed edition of the manuscript version of the same book (which is among the treasures of another of England's stately homes), commented on the similarity between many of its recipes and those that had been recorded in *The Forme of Cury* nearly a hundred years previously. She referred also to some recipes in French that had been among some law papers in the possession of a certain Mr. Horwood. These were in the same hand as the manuscript of *A Noble Boke off Cookry.* Some were very close to the English version given in the latter document; others were more elaborate. Mrs. Napier concluded that much of the *Noble Boke off Cookry* had its origins in French manuscript material even older than *The Forme of Cury.* She may well have been right. It is relevant at this point to make the rather obvious comment that when we look at the contents of old printed cookery books, we must assume that the recipes in them had been current for some time, perhaps quite a long time, before they found their way into print. Elizabeth David, in recording her search for the earliest English ice cream recipe, has emphasized the need to keep this time lag in mind; indeed, she has found that the earliest recorded English ice cream recipe is probably that of Grace, Countess Granville, written in her personal receipt book while she was still a girl, by another hand. The earliest printed English recipe for ice cream seems,

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however, to be that in *Mrs. Eales' Receipts*, published in 1718.

In general, the sixteenth century was a productive one for English cookery books. Printed books on any subject were still relatively few in number. The output of cookery books in the whole of the sixteenth century corresponds no doubt to something like three weeks' output at the present time. Perhaps for this reason, the character and quality of the sixteenth-century books are easier to analyze and appraise, and the innovations that some of them represented are more apparent.

One feature of these early books is that many of them dealt with health and diet as well as with cookery. This combination was a persistent one (and is still to be found today) and reflected the medieval view, inherited mainly from Galen, that there are four elements; four qualities of which all substances including foodstuffs partake; and four humors that characterize human beings. Whoever was in charge of the kitchen, in a household that adhered to this view, was as much concerned to match the qualities of the food with the humors of the consumers as to pay attention to flavors, degrees of doneness, and the other things that preoccupy twentieth-century cooks. However, there was little original English writing along these lines. English authors tended to copy foreign ones, as when *The Secretes of the Reverende Maister Alexis of Piemont* was published in 1558. This and other kindred books had a relatively small cookery content. But some straightforward collections of recipes were published, such as *A Book of Cookrye*, compiled by "A. W." in 1591. I would count this among the very first, if not the first, English cookery book that can be read and used today without an extensive glossary. It can also be read without having to repair to one of the libraries possessing a copy or incurring vast expense in buying a copy, for it is among the volumes reproduced in the series "The English Experience," a large collection of facsimile reproductions of early English printed books published by Walter J. Johnson Inc. and Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, of Norwood, New Jersey, and Amsterdam respectively.

I like the directness of the title of A. W.'s book. In contrast, many of the sixteenth-century books, such as that of Maister Alexis referred to above, made great play with the idea that they were revealing secrets or unveiling hidden treasures. To take a pair of examples, we have in 1573 *The Treasurie of Commodious Conceites, and Hidden Secrets* and in 1588 *The Good Hous-wives Treasurie*. This style of title was further developed in the seventeenth century, when the fashion was to refer to unlocking cabinets or closets (to reveal their secrets and treasures). Thus in 1639 appeared *The Ladies Cabinet Opened*, to be followed almost at once by an improved edition called *The Ladies Cabinet Enlarged and Opened*. The metaphor is beginning to escape control. It also invited competition. What would be the best cabinet to open? The author of *The Queen's Closet Opened* (1655) no doubt thought that she had climbed to the topmost rung of the ladder. Hannah Wolley's title, *The Queen-like Closet*, for the book that she published in 1670, seems rather anticlimactic after that.

In this discussion of titles, we have already strayed past 1600. It was in that year or thereabouts that the first edition of Hugh (later Sir Hugh) Plat's *Delightes for Ladies* was published. This book (of which a charming reprint with an extensive and illuminating introduction by its editors, G. E. and K. R. Fussell, appeared in 1948) will serve well to illustrate three points. The first is that Hugh Plat was not a cook, but a man of learning, an inventor, a farmer, and a gardener. It was from this wide background that he turned his attention to cookery and the associated arts of distilling, perfumery, and so forth. As the Fussells put it: "He made two divagations. One was to write a book about gardening, the other was to produce *Delightes for Ladies*." In fact, the second divagation took him through the garden and into the house, where the domain covered by *Delightes for Ladies* included both the kitchen and the stillroom. At that time, and for some time to come, houses had both, and it was not uncommon for cookery books to be organized in accordance with the internal layout of the house, one section being devoted to activity in the stillroom, where all manner of conserving and distilling were practiced. (Houses commonly had a dairy, too, and the production and handling of dairy goods could also form a separate section or chapter in cookery books.)

So the first point is that some English cook-

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ery writers "came in from the fields," so to speak; the second is that it was common not merely to give recipes for use in the kitchen, but also to cover all the activities concerned with food that went on in a large house and to supplement these with advice on other still-room work. The third point to be exemplified by Plat is that English authors, who were not, of course, alone in this, took great pains over the introductions to their books. In the twentieth century, authors often see no need to explain why they have written their cookery books (although in many instances the question must pose itself to their readers). But in earlier times a preambular justification for the book was of importance and usually exhibited two characteristics: modesty, real or feigned and qualified or not qualified by self-praise; and a high literary style, whether successfully achieved or not. Plat addressed his fair readers in verse, in an introduction that he called "The Epistle," which carefully lists the subjects to be covered in enticing terms:

Of sweetes the sweetest I will now commend
To sweetest creatures that the earth doth beare;

He concludes—after explaining with some emphasis that "painefull practice" and experience have qualified him to expose each "secret" that he strives to teach—by commending the said secrets to his audience with a somewhat surprising metaphor and a final passage of diminuendo modesty:

Accept them well, and let my wearied Muse
Repose her selfe in Ladies laps awhile.
So when she wakes, she happely may record
Her sweetest dreames in some more pleasing stile.

Oxford, in his classic work *English Cookery Books to the Year 1850,* lists fifty-five other books, either devoted to cookery or containing a significant proportion of material thereon, that were first published in the seventeenth century. It is interesting to observe that during this period certain specialized forms of the cookery book emerged. Thus 1653 saw the publication of *A Book of Fruits and Flowers,* with recipes for them and for meat, biscuits, and suchlike confections too. I think that the fruit and flower section of this book may be the first example of a technique that has been rarely used since then but has been adopted by several authors in the twentieth century. This is to start by presenting the fruit or flower, with an illustration and description, and then to give recipes that are specific to it before going on to the next item. Another specialized work was John Evelyn's *Acetaria: A Discourse of Sallets* (that is, salads) (1699). Some years previously Denys Papin published *A New Digester, or Engine for Softening Bones* (1681), which was certainly among the first, if not the first, book to be devoted in a suitably scientific manner to a piece of cookery equipment, namely what we now know as the pressure cooker.

One of the best known books of that century, *The Closet of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie, Kt., Opened* (1669), also has a specialized bent: the number of recipes for making drinks such as meath, metheglin, hydromel, stepony, and strawberry wine is very large. Like Sir Hugh Plat before him and a number of later authors, Sir Kenelme was a man of wide learning, with a questing mind and much natural curiosity. These characteristics are not exclusively British—far from it—but their application to matters of food and cookery is more noticeable in the history of British cookery books than elsewhere. I find much to admire and enjoy in the contemplation of these learned men and their works on the kitchen.

I have recently embarked on a study of "science in the kitchen." If the phrase be taken literally, then, as I hope to show, the period from about 1790 to 1900 was that in which it had most application, or found most expression. If, however, one takes it in a wider sense, then many of the earlier English cookery writers can be said to have brought science, or "experimental philosophy," to bear on their subject matter; and this adds interest to their work by setting it in a wider context.

There were, of course, more simple and professional compilations of recipes made in the seventeenth century. It is common to point to *The Accomplisht Cook* by Robert May, which was first published in 1660 and ran to at least fourteen editions. May was a professional cook of fifty years' experience. And a new genre was inaugurated with the publication of *The Family Dictionary* by "J. H." in 1695. But my own favorite among these businesslike books is that of William Rabisha, *The Whole Body of Cookery Dis-*

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sected (1661). This is a well-organized and practical book of recipes by someone who described himself as "Master Cook to many honourable Families before and since the wars began, both in this my Native Countrey, and with Embassadors and other Nobles in certain forraign Parts." Rabisha made a point, in the lengthy subtitling of his work, of saying that he was drawing on the culinary traditions of other countries, for example, of France, Italy, and Holland.

This leads me to the questions: How far did English cookery writers go in using recipes from overseas, and when did a tendency to do so in more than a casual way become apparent? I am not referring here to the natural use of recipes that had in fact been imported long ago (such as those of French origin in *The Forme of Cury*), but to the deliberate introduction into English cookery books of recipes identified as belonging to another country. The answer is that, apart from a few translations of foreign works, there was little sign of this in the sixteenth century, not much more in the seventeenth (Rabisha being one exception), but a growing trend in that direction in the eighteenth (when cookery books were often sprinkled with recipes for something "in the Dutch manner" or "in the French style"). Only in the nineteenth century do we find any kind of systematic and eclectic approach to the gathering and presentation of foreign recipes.

A smaller question is linked with the larger ones, namely: When did English cookery writers first begin to indicate regional sources within England for their recipes? This question in turn leads to others. To what extent did early cookery writers give *any* indication of the sources of their recipes? And how much plagiarism took place? These questions find their answers in the eighteenth century, to which we now come. I shall give priority here to three writers whose work I greatly admire, although they are far less famous than, for example, Hannah Glasse.

Cambridge University appointed its first Professor of Botany in 1724. He was Richard Bradley, then in his mid-thirties and already distinguished for his botanical work and his inquiries into agriculture. On his death in 1732, Bradley was succeeded by a certain John Martyn, who appears to have been a man of many faults, both of commission and of omission. These faults he proceeded to attribute to his dead predecessor, with such effect that Bradley's reputation has been clouded since then until recent times, when scholars have probed into the matter and vindicated him. It is this unfortunate history, or perhaps the fact that Bradley's two cookery books were among the last of the forty-two books that he wrote, the second being the very last of all, that has caused a general and, in any other circumstances, highly surprising neglect of his work on cookery. As a symbol of what happened, I may take my own volume of Bradley. It is three volumes bound as one. The first is *The Country Gentleman and Farmer's Monthly Director* (sixth edition, with additions: "Particularly some rules for breeding Pheasants, by a Gentleman," 1736). The second is the sixth edition (also 1736) of *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director*. The third is a work with the same title, but described as Part II, first published in 1732 but here also bearing the date 1736. Because the Farmer came first in the trilogy, the book found its way onto the shelves of a specialist in antiquarian books on agriculture. Fortunately, a colleague of his, one of the lynx-eyed specialists in old cookery books of whom we have but three or four in the United Kingdom, spotted it and realized that its real value lay in the second and third volumes. The trilogy passed into my hands; I am happy to have all three volumes, and in their present order, for Bradley was another cookery writer who "came in from the fields." It was his interest in botany, in the introduction of novel plants from the New World and their acclimatization in England, and above all in the use to which the products of agriculture and market gardening were put—for he was a most practical man—that led Bradley to round off his numerous and learned works by directing his words to "The Ladies of Great Britain, etc." (What does "etc." mean?—presumably, all non-British female inhabitants of the globe) in an opening address, which I insist on quoting for the sheer pleasure that the prose affords me:

> The Reason which induces me to address the following Piece to the Fair Sex, is, because the principal Matters contained in it are within the Liberty of their Province. The Art of Oeconomy is divided, as *Xenophon* tells us, between the Men and the

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Women; the Men have the most dangerous and laborious Share of it in the Fields, and without doors, and the Women have the Care and Management of every Business within doors, and to see after the good ordering of whatever is belonging to the House. And this, I conceive, is no less the Practice of these Days, than it was in the time of that great Philosopher; therefore it may seem necessary that I make some Apology for the Work I now publish, which, for the most part, falls within the Ladies Jurisdiction: but I hope I am the more excusable, as my design is rather to assist, than to direct. I may call myself rather their Amanuensis, than their Instructor; for the Receipts which I imagine will give the greatest Lustre or Ornament to the following Treatise, are such as are practised by some of the most ingenious Ladies, who had Good-nature enough to admit of a Transcription of them for publick Benefit; and to do them justice, I must acknowledge that every one who has try'd them, allow them to excel in their way. The other Receipts are such as I have collected in my Travels, as well through *England*, as in foreign countries, and are such as I was prompted to enter into my List, as well for their Curiosity as for their extraordinary Goodness.

And so to the recipes. Bradley's introduction will already have shown that many of these come from individuals, whom he names. Many are also ascribed to places or regions in England. Earlier writers may have occasionally made such references, but Bradley seems to have been the first to grasp the idea of regional cookery and to see something of interest in it. He was an assiduous traveler and seasons his collection of recipes with many pleasing anecdotes, a habit dear to my own heart. As I wrote elsewhere: "The wholly practical and methodical cookery book has its place on every cook's shelf. Yet a place is reserved too for the cookery book which can be dipped into outside the kitchen as well as used in it." Bradley is the earliest author who fulfills this requirement of mine; and he fulfills it in a manner both instructive and entertaining. In discussing Stilton cheese, for example, he not only gives one of the earliest detailed accounts of it but also recalls his own visit to the Blue-Bell Inn in Stilton; and in explaining how to make "Marygold Cheese" he describes vividly his own reactions to it. One has the feeling, in perusing his pages, that here is a real human being communicating his own experiences and thoughts to us across the centuries, in a manner so idiosyncratic that it must have been his natural style, and with so many attributions and expressions of thanks (especially to the ladies who wrote to him, imparting their favorite recipes, after his first volume had appeared, and whose missives constitute a large part of the second volume) that even the faintest suspicion of plagiarism is banished.

Mention of plagiarism leads me to Mary Cole, a redoubtable opponent thereof. Her book *The Lady's Complete Guide; or Cookery and Confectionary in all their Branches* was first published in 1789. It provides ample evidence, if any were needed, that plagiarism was rife among the seventeenth-century cookery writers. It was not uncommon for the more heinous offense of pirating a complete book to be committed; and this was done on a transatlantic basis in the latter half of the century when whole books on cookery, published in England, were republished in North America without so much as a by-your-leave. But what aroused Mrs. Mary Cole's wrath was the manner in which certain writers simply lifted recipes from other books and stuck them into their own, without a word of acknowledgment.

Mrs. Cole herself made great use of cookery books that had appeared earlier in the century, such as the admirable *The Experienced English Housekeeper* (1769, and a score of later editions) by the enterprising Elizabeth Raffald (who is said to have borne sixteen daughters and who engaged in business activities such as innkeeping, founding newspapers, and publishing the first directory of Manchester); *The Lady's Assistant* (1775) by Mrs. Charlotte Mason; *The Professed Cook* (1769), which was a translation by Clermont of the French book *Les Soupers de la Cour* by Menon; the well-known book by Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1747, and numerous further editions extending into the nineteenth century); and many others. The feature that distinguished Mrs. Cole's book was that she said plainly whence her recipes came. This does not apply to quite all of them, for some are unattributed and must be assumed to represent her family or personal receipts, and for others there was no written source. But the majority of her recipes have attributions—many have multiple attributions—showing that she had studied two or three versions of the same recipe

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and amalgamated them into what she thought the best prescription. This was indeed conscientious. More recent writers, who have been good enough to acknowledge the source of a recipe when lifting it bodily from some other work, have not thought it necessary to explain the origin of amalgamated recipes; on the contrary, they have felt that by using more than one source they have absolved themselves from the duty of acknowledging any.

There was, however, or seems to have been, another aspect of Mrs. Cole's character that deserves mention. The subtitle of her book, which—as was normal in the period—is long, contains references to a number of "Cooks of Eminence who have published in France" and says that some of Mrs. Cole's recipes are translated from them. These French cooks include the Duke de Nivernois, M. Disang (said to be the author of a book called *Le Maître d'Hôtel*), M. Valois, and M. Delatour. As Oxford remarked, it is odd that these authors do not appear in the bibliography of (mainly) French cookery books by Georges Vicaire or, indeed, in any other works of reference. Until recently I had assumed that they must have been obscure works that had not survived, although a little reflection should have made me realize that this was hardly credible. Recently my eyes have been opened to the truth: the names are printed in jest, and by way of mocking those English authors who made a great to-do about following French authors. Those cited by Mrs. Cole were men of straw, invented by herself. So we must credit her also with wit and a pleasing capacity for innocent deception.

Before leaving the eighteenth century, I wish to mention one other highly original writer, W. Ellis, author of *The Country Housewife's Family Companion* (1750). His work appeared very soon after the first edition of Mrs. Glasse, but there is a world of difference between them. Mrs. Glasse, for all her merits of clear presentation, is not a very inspiring author to read. W. Ellis is. His book abounds in anecdotal material, based on his own experience as a farmer in Essex (he, too, "came in from the fields" to the kitchen) and his travels and correspondence with people elsewhere in England, and provides the fullest collection published up to that time (and indeed until much later) of English regional recipes. There is also an earthy quality to his book, even in his recipe titles, which invests it with that aura of direct communication across the centuries that I noted in connection with Richard Bradley: "An Oatmeal Pudding made constantly, as part of a Milk Diet, for a gouty Man"; "A Letter from a worthy Gentleman to this Author concerning the Improvement of baked Pears"; "How a Cow's Life was saved that was hoved in Clover, when internal Remedies failed, shewn by a Case of my Neighbour's Cow" (the unfortunate cow was stabbed with a penknife, whereupon "out came Dung and Wind in a very violent Manner," and the wound was then tarred and pitched); "How the Guts or Chauldron of a Calf is to be made into a Pye." These are arresting headings, and the reader who is thereby tempted to read the recipes in full will not be disappointed. He will, incidentally, also find that sources are frequently quoted and that among them are several of the most-favored-by-Davidson writers, such as Sir Kenelme Digbie and William Rabisha.

While Mrs. Cole was chastising the plagiarists, a whole new branch of writing on cookery was emerging, in which plagiarism was to be much less easy. I refer to books treating cookery from the scientific point of view. Hitherto cookery had been regarded as an art or skill. True, the medieval followers of Galen had thought that they were practicing a kind of science when they rambled away about the four humors; but their approach had little connection with cooking as opposed to foodstuffs. Now, in 1792, we find Francis Collingwood and John Woollams, "Principal Cooks at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand," announcing in the preface to their book, *The Universal Cook*, that "cookery is become a science." Admittedly they go on to say, "Every age has contributed its mite to the improvement of this art," thus retaining the earlier concept (and quite rightly, in my view, for it seems plain to me that cookery is a science, an art, and a skill, and that the choice between the three descriptive terms must on any given occasion be determined by the question, "Who is cooking what and how?").

The new approach was further exhibited when William Nisbet, in his *Practical Treatise on Diet* (1801), made a valiant attempt to preserve something of the doctrine of the four humors, while applying to it so many sensible

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qualifications that it was thoroughly attenuated. He concluded his book with a section entitled "The Application of Modern Chemistry to the Culinary Preparation of Food," in which he stated roundly that "the art of cookery is a branch of chemistry." Meanwhile, the celebrated Count Rumford, a former American and a man of many talents, had been approaching the matter from a different angle. To cut a long and fascinating story short, he found himself on New Year's Day, 1790, taking charge of a carefully planned operation by the military and civilian authorities of Bavaria to capture peaceably and install in workhouses the notorious beggars of that country, who had been terrorizing the inhabitants. The operation was a complete success, achieved with great economy. One aspect of the economy of the plan was that it included provision for feeding the surprised and incarcerated beggars a nutritious and adequate diet at the lowest possible cost. It was this requirement that enabled Count Rumford to exhibit his skill in the physics of cookery and his (perhaps dubious) prowess in the science of nutrition. Rumford was indeed the first scientist after Papin to apply scientific principles and practice to the construction of cookery apparatus, including ovens, pots and pans, and even coffee pots. His approach was truly scientific in that he did not merely advocate the use of the apparatus that he designed, or demonstrate its advantages in matters such as economy of fuel, but reached his results by means of careful experiments and explained *why* his inventions worked better than what had hitherto been available.

This irruption of science into the kitchen was a noticeable feature of writing on food and cookery throughout the nineteenth century. There were, of course, many cookery books published that took no account of this. But many authors adapted their work to the fashion and furnished their readers with elaborate explanations of what happens to a piece of beef when it is boiled, and so on. The German scientist Liebig was perhaps the most influential figure in this field during the latter part of the century, and a work such as *The Chemistry of Cookery* by W. Mattieu Williams (second edition, 1892) is generously seasoned with references to him. But England had produced, earlier in the century, one classic work on the subject, *Culinary Chemistry* by Fredrick Accum (1821), of which the first page is boldly headed "Cookery is a Branch of Chemical Science." It was this same Accum who introduced his other work, on the adulteration of foods, with the arresting pronouncement: "There is Death in the Pot."

Passing on to the nineteenth century, I shall bypass the well-known figures Eliza Acton and Mrs. Isabella Beeton, pausing only to remark that the former author's *Modern Cookery* (1845) is among the most elegantly written (and practical) cookery books ever published and that Mrs. Beeton should be judged, and favorably judged, by her first edition (1861) of *Beeton's Book of Household Management* rather than by later versions, published after her death at the age of twenty-eight, in which many changes were made, often for the worse.

I would rather draw attention to the emergence in the nineteenth century of certain new kinds of cookery books. One such was the work of William Hughes, a lawyer who was an enthusiast for fish. Under the pen name Piscator he published in 1843 a book entitled *Fish: how to choose and how to dress,* which was, as far as I can discover, the first book published in Great Britain—possibly the first in the world—devoted to fish cookery. It came out in a second edition in 1854 and is a work of high quality, suffused throughout by first-hand knowledge and genuine enthusiasm. It can be regarded as the prototype of all those books on Meat Cookery, Seafood Cookery, Game Cookery, etc., that we can now count on finding in any bookshop. I suppose that it could also be described as archetypal, since it is much better than most later publications.

It was also during Victorian times that British writers began to treat foreign cuisines more seriously and to write about them on the basis of personal experience. The increasingly good facilities for travel no doubt had something to do with this. There was, naturally, no lack of books about French cookery or translations of French cookery books or books written by French chefs who had been uprooted by the political disturbances inaugurated by the French Revolution and who had migrated to England. This interest in French cuisine is not surprising, given the propinquity of France and the general belief, right or wrong, that the French were the most advanced nation, gastronomically, in the world. It is of greater interest to note that as long ago

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as 1827 a book called *Domestic Economy and Cookery,* by "A Lady," had included a fairly wide range of exotic recipes. The author stated in her preface that long residence abroad had made her familiar with European cooking, and that "the mullakatanies and curries of India, the sweet pillaus, yahourt, and cold soups of Persia; the cubbubs, sweet yaughs and sherbets of Egypt; the cold soups and mixed meats of Russia, the cucussous and honeyed paste of Africa, have been inserted with the view of introducing a less expensive and more wholesome and a more delicate mode of cookery."

The appearance in 1846 of *The Jewish Manual,* a work that contained much material about Jewish cookery, marked a further innovation: writing about ethnic cookery.

Moreover, it was during this period that the existence and global extent of the British Empire began, gradually and rather belatedly, to exert important influences on British cookery and cookery writing. Recipes for curries and for such dishes as kedgeree and sea turtle dressed in the West Indian manner had appeared in the earlier English cookery books; but, as far as I have been able to discover, no book of the eighteenth century or earlier had a special chapter devoted to, say, Indian cookery. A volume called *Indian Domestic Cookery* was published in the middle of the nineteenth century and ran to six editions. But all other achievement in this field is, to my mind, overshadowed by the work of an army officer, Colonel Kenney Herbert, whose first publications came out under the pen name "Wyvern." Stationed in India, he contributed articles to the *Madras Athenaeum and Daily News* and then built around this material a book called *Culinary Jottings for Madras.* This is a splendid volume. The colonel believed in surrounding his recipes with historical material, etymological explanations, amusing anecdotes, and, above all, every detail that seemed relevant to him about the choice and purchase of ingredients as well as the preparation of the dish itself. He went on to write other cookery books, including a series that began with *Fifty Breakfasts* and ended with *Fifty Dinners*—another new genre of cookery writing. But his idiosyncratic character is exhibited best in his first work.

So far I have been dealing with English cookery books—books not merely in the English language but written and published in England. The title of my article, though, refers to *British* rather than to *English* cookery books, for I was unwilling, as a Scot, to see Scotland neglected. (Ireland and Wales, unfortunately, have to be; for it is only recently that they have produced cookery books, and I shall be stopping this survey short at the beginning of the present century.)

Scotland has a fine tradition of cookery books, well written and of interesting content. I used to think that one of the earliest was that of Mrs. Maciver, entitled *Cookery and Pastry: as taught and practised by Mrs. Maciver, teacher of those Arts in Edinburgh* and first published at Edinburgh in 1773. But, alas, I have discovered that she was the English wife of a Scotsman, and although she used Scottish liquid measures, there is very little else Scottish in her book.

For something really Scottish, read *The Cook and Housewife's Manual* by Mistress Margaret Dods of the Cleikum Inn, Saint Ronan's (1826). This book, purporting to be by a character in Sir Walter Scott's novel *St. Ronan's Well,* is prefaced by a diverting and sometimes incomprehensible introduction in which another character from the novel, Peregrine Touchwood, Esquire, more commonly styled "the Cleikum Nabob," descends on Mistress Margaret Dods and becomes involved with "the celebrated Dr. Redgill" in a curious farrago of horseplay (as when the doctor is charged by a porker and turns "a somerset") and gastronomic philosophy, punctuated by dour Scottish comments from Mistress Margaret Dods. Thereafter it sobers up and constitutes an excellent manual for the cook, embracing Scottish, English, and French dishes in its scope. The old connection between Scotland and France peeps through from time to time, as when we read of a "howtowdie," which was originally a *hetoudeau,* or young caponized chicken.

Another good Scottish book of the period was *The Practice of Cookery* by Mrs. Dalgairns (1829); but this was lacking in zaniness and had a smaller number of Scots recipes. I prefer *Modern Domestic Cookery* by Jenny Wren (Paisley, 1880), whose introductory material contains much earnest reflection on economy and value for money. She dismisses any thought that she is writing for the well-to-do or the profligates of this life and declares

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her intended audience to be "the classes who . . . like to look at both sides of a shilling before it departs from them for ever."

The enormous mass of cookery books published in recent decades calls for rather different treatment; anyway it is harder to see recent books in a historical perspective. I hope, however, that I have said enough here to demonstrate that all the main genres of cookery books had emerged by the end of the nineteenth century, and that the evolution of British cookery books up to that point had followed what might be described as a natural course, although nudged from time to time by amiably eccentric writers, whose works punctuated its route much as architectural follies, usually of great charm, dot the English landscape.

Ancestor

ANNE NICODEMUS CARPENTER

My father was an ancestor well before he died.
By eight, his real eyes, too blind to see the stars,
Knew what lay around the next bend in the river,
Listening to his father,
Pontifical master of misinformation,
Running on about the crows and their sagacity,
"They know immediately if you have a gun."
Statement of fact. The crows cawed smugly above their heads.
The boy took a firm grip on the pistol in his pocket
And on his own counsel,
He never let it go.
An ancestor is, by definition, deaf,
No matter how he smiles in his brocade,
Bows deeply to his wife, feeds his goldfish,
Cares for his water lilies, strolls with his reverent Pekingese.
He is soundproofed in another time zone,
Secure in his kimono.
Gliding, at last, downstream, gathering speed,
He left us all, outdistanced on the bank,
Dumbfounded to see his frantic waving,
Watching as the whole thing capsized into earshot.

✪ ANNE NICODEMUS CARPENTER's poems have appeared in *Poetry* and the *Nassau Literary Magazine*.

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The Vanquished and Their Prey

EUGEN WEBER

VICHY FRANCE AND THE JEWS. *By Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton. Basic Books. $20.95.*

In the spring of 1940, Kenneth Clark crossed from London to Paris to talk to René Clair about a possible film. "After the long faces of England, everyone in Paris seemed very jolly." Talking to colleagues in the French Information Ministry he understood why that was: "The French were not going to fight." A few months later, after the fall of Paris, he received a visit from André Maurois, who was very angry with the English for standing up to Hitler when the French had crumbled. "He said that our obstinacy was an insult to France, a menace to Europe and a crime against history. . . . I realized that at this moment the French, having failed to fight the Germans, felt they must fight someone. . . ." *Vichy France and the Jews* shows how, defeated by the Germans, some of the French—or, at least, the Vichy regime—set out to recoup themselves by fighting the Jews.

Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton tell the fascinating and depressing tale of this campaign, which began within days of Marshal Pétain's establishment as head of state. Thoroughly researched, dispassionate yet not unfeeling, this is the definitive study of a searing time. The French version of their book is a best-seller in Paris; the English-language version looks like it will become one here—and deservedly, since it provides more than the detail of events: it provides their wider context.

For what happened in France between 1940 and 1944 was a continuation of developments common to the 1920s, and especially to the 1930s, and it was a precipitation (one more) of even longer trends. Marrus and Paxton write the history of events, but situate their history in the context of a much longer duration, in which the actors, victims included, are prisoners less of immediate contingencies than of a hoary script. They write of individual tragedy and the suffering and private dread of thousands—of time-bound creatures caught in the timeless tortured history of anti-Semitism and anti-foreignism. A chronicler of the 1890s tells the story of two workmen commenting on the death of the duke of Montpensier: "Seems he leaves 50 million . . ." and the other: "Ah! these Jews!" Beyond those who did not like Jews, there lay a broader circle of people who just did not like foreigners, who were prepared to regard Jews as stereotypical foreigners, and hence saw Vichy's anti-Jewish measures as justified or, at best, indifferent. We shall come to this in a moment. Meanwhile, we may agree with the authors that, in a time of crisis, it did not take much propaganda (the great anti-Jewish exhibition the Germans helped mount in 1941 attracted a half-million *paying* visitors, and close to one million altogether) to make some level of anti-Semitism widely acceptable in France.

Nineteenth-century Frenchmen had done more than anyone else to distill the poisons of anti-Semitism. They started from a bitter base of religious bigotry (where Protestants of the Calvinist persuasion might compare themselves to the Chosen People, Catholics snarled over the contrast) and added social

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demurrers and economic resentments, before stirring in charges of cultural inassimilability and biological corruption. The Jews were denounced as agents of Satan and of secularism, of capital and revolution, of the international money power and of sweatshop exploitation, of gorged idleness and hungry competition. In the new Darwinian context of survival of the fittest, they were the contaminating element. In the national state, they were the resident aliens par excellence. However enthusiastically some Jews might seek assimilation, the persistent diversity of others challenged the cult of cultural homogeneity. Openly expressed, scarcely visible, or unacknowledged, antipathy to Jews lurked ready to be tapped.

In this respect, there were some French who shocked even the Germans. Céline told Ernst Jünger that he could not understand why German soldiers were not exterminating Jews: "If the Bolsheviks were in Paris, they would show you how to set about it." And Robert Brasillach: "They must all be killed, even the little children." Others, less extreme, contributed their share. Marcel Jouhandeau, who in 1937 preferred Hitler to Léon Blum, was still virulently anti-Semitic when visiting Weimar in 1941. And David Pryce-Jones, in his recent book, quotes Coco Chanel at dinner, going into a long tirade against the Jews. The sentiments of someone like Louise de Vilmorin, future wife of Romain Gary and great love of André Malraux after Duff Cooper seduced and rehabilitated her, are less clear. But her frequent visits to Nazi Berlin and her ardent feelings of friendship for the occupants justified the nickname Loulou de Poméranie. Of course one could like Germans, or at least some Germans, without disliking Jews, as did Edith Piaf, who could not have cared less about politics. But traditional predispositions, although they did not inspire anti-Semitic policies, made them easier to accept.

The rabid hatred of a few, the diffuse antipathies of many, could focus more intensely in a time of crisis. As Marrus and Paxton see it, the Jews became a kind of lightning rod for generalized urban-rural tensions, resentment and fear about scarcities and price increases, envy of "others" who were rumored to have it easy, and even guilt about common practices, like breaking the law, blackmarketing, or antigovernment remarks. They were denounced as "tourists" and "outsiders" who ate too well and spent too much money. As early as August 1940 a prefect (soon to be removed from office for his Popular Front connections) reported "anti-Semitism growing among ordinary people." Three years later, many of the French still saw the Jews as privileged people rather than as victims. In a report of 1943, the prefect of Limoges wished that Jews would show "less smug satisfaction," because they are not being shipped to Germany like the young Frenchmen being "deported" for labor service there. A year before that, as the first convoys were leaving for Auschwitz, a clandestine Resistance publication, the *Cahiers OCM*, devoted a whole issue to a rather anti-Semitic discussion of the need to solve the Jewish problem, which Simone Weil, who read it in London, found perfectly sensible. Its author, Maxime Blocq-Mascart, an economist of Jewish origins, would in 1945 join men like René Pleven and François Mitterand in founding a party of the moderate Left: the UDSR. So Jews agreed that there was a Jewish problem. So, apparently, did President Roosevelt when, in January 1943, at Casablanca, he expressed sympathy for a *numerus clausus* for Jews in professions where they were clearly overrepresented, a fact that explained "the specific and understandable complaints which the Germans bore towards the Jews in Germany." In the end, the Jews were *others*, the Jewish problem a *Jewish* problem. As the eminently civilized Jean Paulhan said in a radio interview of 1952: "I suppose that without [Pétain] we would have had a hundred times more martyrs and death." Presumably, the "we" referred to the French—not to the Jews.

Let it be said at once that anti-Jewish prejudice was less potent in France—where it clashed with strong liberal and assimilationist traditions—than in many other countries. The French Resistance was always less anti-Semitic than the Resistance movement of Eastern Europe—notably that of the Poles. Social and professional integration had gone further in France since the nineteenth century, exclusionism, for instance, was less than in the United States, and the authors remark that French universities were open to Jewish professors in a way the American universities were only gingerly testing in the 1930s and, sometimes, in the 1950s. Most important, be-

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tween the wars France had become "the leading country of immigration in the world." In the later 1930s it counted 515 immigrants per 100,000 inhabitants, compared to 492 immigrants per 100,000 in the United States. By summer 1938, it sheltered 180,000 foreign refugees, not counting those already naturalized. Foreigners and refugees of different origins had been welcomed, or at least accepted, over the years out of interest, principle, or indifference. In the 1930s, economic and political debate began to swirl around them. No wonder. In 1936, there were over 720,000 Italians in France, and many of them were active anti-Fascists. In the ten days following the collapse of Republican resistance in Catalonia, in January 1939, more than 400,000 Spaniards and international volunteers streamed over the Pyrenean border, causing extraordinary strains. In a context of economic depression and international tension, the refugees—of whom France received proportionately more than any other country—weighed upon the slack employment market (even the Communist party opposed further immigration), and also threatened to involve France in international complications that many wanted to avoid.

With pacifism rife, Jews and other refugees were seen as active or potential warmongers. The Nationalist Right argued that the country was not ready for war, especially one waged for the interests of others. But the Left was no different. In 1938, Simone Weil declared she preferred German hegemony to war, even though it would mean "certain laws of exclusion against Communists and Jews." The pacifist Left was no more willing to go to war "over 100,000 Polish Jews" than it would be "to die for Danzig." In the wake of *Kristallnacht* on November 9, 1938, even the Grand Rabbi, while sympathizing "with the pain of 600,000 German Israelites," found peace more precious and French-German rapprochement more desirable than the friction a new wave of German refugees would bring.

It is important to remember, therefore, as Marrus and Paxton insist, that Vichy's policies were simply an extension of those initiated under the Third Republic. The war scare of November 1938 led to a decree regulating the status and supervision of foreigners, narrowing the more generous immigration and residence provisions of earlier years, preparing the way for "purging" the country of undesirable aliens—including "unworthy" holders of naturalization papers—and for the setting up of "centers" that turned into concentration camps within a few months, when thousands of Spanish refugees had to be lodged there at a cost of 200 million francs a month. Those who were still there in September 1939 were joined by some 15,000 foreign males—mostly Germans and Austrians, but including many anti-Nazis—then, after May 1940, by a lot more aliens of every provenance.

In most respects, French camps (it was a Republican politician, Albert Sarraut, who first described the "centers" as "concentration camps") were as bad as Nazi ones—at least, up to the beginnings of extermination in 1942. Arthur Koestler, sent to the one at Le Vernet (Ariège) before France fell, confirmed that the food of Franco's prisons had been more substantial and nourishing. Internees who had been to Nazi camps found those superior in food, accommodations, and hygiene—more deadly only because the beatings, common to both, would in Germany be deliberately continued to the point of death. French documents confirm this. At Gurs (Basses-Pyréneés), 18,000 men, women, and children were packed in a camp built to house 15,000 Spanish refugees. In November 1940, the German Red Cross expressed alarm about the rate of deaths there from starvation. The camp at Rivesaltes (Pyréneés-Orientales), dating from World War I, was built on a stony plain and subject, said the Vichy inspector of camps, to glacial winds in winter and torrid heat in summer. Water was short, cleanliness even shorter, sanitary conditions primitive—the place, in the inspector's words, almost a reprisal camp. There were thirty-one such camps in 1940 in the unoccupied zone, and the number of internees for all of France probably hovered somewhere below 100,000, with Jews accounting for two-thirds of them. Fourteen or fifteen thousand more Jews were interned in Algeria. These numbers declined between 1940 and 1942, largely as a result of deportation, partly as a result of release, emigration, or death. Thousands died in the camps, of course, mostly Jews, but also Gypsies, veterans of the International Brigades, and assorted foreigners. In the camp cemetery at Gurs, 1187 persons are buried: 20 Spaniards, the remainder Jews.

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So, Vichy's own anti-Jewish program was neither new nor inspired by some lunatic fringe of the Right. It fed on the previous decade's obsession with the menace of foreign refugees threatening jobs, culture, and peace. The anti-Semitic tradition singled out the Jews for special animosity, because history had established the Jews as aliens par excellence and, while this coincided with Nazi intentions, it often moved ahead of the occupiers' own policies. The German victory, the German presence, offered an opportunity for decisive action. As Alfred Rosenberg told the French in a speech delivered in late 1940, "Germany [had] freed the French people from those parasites which they were no longer in a position to be rid of by their own methods." By then, the Vichy government had begun to take advantage of its opportunities.

Well into 1941, Germany's own anti-Jewish policy was hesitant, cautious, and slow, concentrating on ridding the Reich of its Jews, while retaining their property. There were no attempts to extend anti-Jewish measures taken in occupied territories to the unoccupied zone, but rather to use the latter as a dumping ground for unwanted German Jews. What developed in Vichy was neither imposed from outside nor really preemptive, but a series of "autonomous acts taken in pursuit of indigenous goals," a policy intended to benefit from the property confiscations it involved, from the controls it imposed, and from measures intended to strengthen national homogeneity. By October 1940, the trickle of harassing measures that had begun in late summer was formalized in the explicitly racist *Statut des Juifs*, which assigned French Jews an inferior position in civil law, excluded them from top civil service posts, from holding officer or noncommissioned ranks in the services, and from all professions connected with public opinion: teaching, journalism, or entertainment. The Armistice Army, limited to 125,000, would be purged of Jews at all ranks. The thousands of foreign Jewish volunteers who had enthusiastically enlisted when war broke out were now interned or sent to labor camps—to be used as slave labor along the Trans-Sahara railway then abuilding. Economic Aryanization laws that transferred Jewish businesses by the tens of thousands and Jewish property to French profiteers were justified by the argument that French goods were being kept out of German hands. With the Germans eager to seize the homes and belongings of Jews, this was not an empty concern. Even so, by 1944, the Germans reported the appropriation of 69,619 homes of deported Jews, 38,000 of them in Paris, complete with all their contents.

Harassed and bewildered, French Jews, especially in the unoccupied zone, were still "protected" by the state. Foreign ones were fair game. "The good old French Jews have a right to every protection we can give them," insisted Admiral Darlan. "The stateless Jews who have thronged our country for the last fifteen years don't interest me." About half the 350,000 Jews in France were French citizens. That left a good number to practice on, before the difference vanished.

What happened, essentially, was that the Germans wanted the French authorities to carry out measures against the Jews and bear the responsibility for them. Vichy joined in wholeheartedly and assimilated much of the German project while adding touches of its own, regarding the campaign not as a servile imitation, but as a rival anti-Semitism. As the director of the French Police for Jewish Affairs reported to Vichy in 1942, the Jewish problem in France "ought to be considered in strictly national terms and resolved by entirely national measures." In this spirit, the first commissioner for Jewish questions, appointed in 1941 to head the *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives* (CGQJ), would be a nationalist and anti-German veteran leader: Xavier Vallat. By extending anti-Semitic measures to the unoccupied zone and stamping them "made in Vichy"; by administering anti-Jewish measures in the occupied zone, for which, theoretically, they remained responsible, the rump government hoped to diminish the German grip on the occupied areas, enhance the reach of their own administrators, and also (though, as we have seen, with only moderate success) to channel confiscated Jewish property into French, not German, hands.

The German policy of encouraging Jewish emigration from Europe only changed some time after their invasion of Russia. Vichy went on somewhat longer trying to rid itself of "foreigners and Frenchmen superfluous to the national economy." It succeeded in hav-

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ing some 3,000 Jews emigrate from the unoccupied zone in 1941 and 2,000 more in the first six months of 1942, despite the obstacles raised by the office of the commissioner for Jewish questions. By mid-1942 they were conforming to the new German policies, preparatory of the Final Solution, and only 600 Jews left the country in the second half of that year. It must be said that attempts to get Jews out of France found mostly closed doors. Switzerland had prohibited their entry since 1938; the British did not accept Jewish refugees either at home or in Palestine, for fear of anti-Semitism in England and Arab opposition in Palestine; the United States accepted no more than a trickle before their own entry into war raised barriers even higher; Canada admitted no more than a handful. In 1942, pressed by American Quakers, Laval inquired why the United States did not do more to help the Jews. He had a point. The American chargé d'affaires in Vichy repeated Laval's "callous" remark that France already had too many of them. On reflection, one wonders whether the United States and other countries were not being just as callous.

Martin Gilbert's dispassionate and depressing study *Auschwitz and the Allies* tells us that, in December 1942, when word of death camps was circulating in higher quarters, the British Colonial Office minuted: "Familiar stuff. The Jews have spoilt their case by laying it on too thick for years past." Nearly two years after that, when few doubts remained, the Foreign Office, which in 1943 had worried about the trouble Jews rescued from enemy-occupied territory could cause, still complained that a "disproportionate amount of [their] time [was being] wasted on dealing with these wailing Jews." The one instance of American generosity, when in August 1942 Cordell Hull offered 1,000 entry visas for Jewish children with a possibility of 5,000 more to follow, foundered on the inertia and administrative routine of French authorities, which might also have seen the children as useful for filling German deportation quotas. At any rate, by the time the Germans occupied the hitherto unoccupied zone in November 1942, no children had left France. Few survived to do so thereafter.

French opinion was mostly indifferent. The public had other fish to fry. It did not take anti-Semitic sentiments, let alone pro-German ones, to keep most people supine or cooperative. By all appearances, deliberate anti-Semitic propaganda during the occupation years, whether it came from Vichy sources or Nazi-sponsored ones, did not meet with too much success in exacerbating whatever sentiments existed. In January 1942, a hard-drinking and only marginally literate official of the Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions reported to his German masters that "a pro-Semitic tendency seems apparent, and people take pity on a certain category of Jews." But this did not go far. In his recent *The Holocaust and the German Elite*, Rainer Baum argues that, compared to other political or personal concerns of the Nazi elite, the Jewish problem was a sideshow. If this was so for Nazis, the more reason why it should be of slight interest to the many French for whom survival (or revenge) came first, and everything else far behind. That left the Jews to the ambition and energies of committed anti-Semitic activists, like Xavier Vallat. Vallat's life had once been saved by a Jewish doctor: an anecdotal detail that underscores the hazards of modern medicine. More to the point, his anti-Semitism was more "cultural" than racist, based on doubt that Jews could truly assimilate into French culture. Yet Vallat, too, not a dishonest man, though a compulsive maniac, ended on the side of race because "race" alone seemed to provide the simple categories that an exclusionist policy demanded. He would be succeeded by far more corrupt and murderous characters, but even under them Vichy's long-range anti-Semitic goals remained limited—discriminating and not intentionally murderous—a qualification that influenced events only slightly.

To help in the work of racial discrimination, an Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions was set up with German funds. It would be headed by George Montandon, a Swiss physician, naturalized French, author of a number of works on anthropology and eugenics. Interested in the relation between race and physiognomy, especially in the possibility of identifying Jews by their physical characteristics, Montandon became the foremost Vichy expert on the Jewish race, professor of ethnoraciology, conducting physical examinations to establish a racial provenance that proved increasingly a matter of life or death, hence a rich source of profit in examination fees. It is

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refreshing to record that he would be shot and killed by the Resistance in July 1944.

In this climate, slander and denunciation flourished. The singer, Charles Trenet, had to deny that his name was an anagram of the Jewish-sounding Netter; the dancer Serge Lifar that he was really called Rafil; Sacha Guitry that he was the grandson of a peddler called Gutman. With his usual flair, Céline wrote to the *Stürmer*-like *Au Pilori*: "I've always encouraged defamation. I love it." The founder of the famous orchestral Concerts Colonne, Jules-Edouard-Juda Colonne, long dead, had been a Jew, so the concerts were suspended (music by Jewish composers was banned, of course, though not Offenbach's "Cancan"), and Colonne's adopted daughter issued a public statement that any kinship between them was purely formal and involuntary on her part. The well-known opticians, Frères Lissac, advertised: "Lissac is not Isaac." The even better known café Dupont ("Chez Dupont tout est bon!") put up a sign "Forbidden to dogs and Jews."

On a more practical level, anti-Jewish measures were enforced with professional detachment, reflecting no particular hostility. As the Germans described them, police carried out orders "loyally," magistrates enforced statutes "with professional thoroughness." As a German remembers, "The French could not have been more helpful." Professor Georges Ripert who, as dean of the Paris Faculty of Law, had opposed racial and religious prejudice in 1938, applied anti-Semitic laws as minister of education in 1940. As he said in the preface he contributed in 1943 to a book on Nazi legislation, "The scientist has the right to take no interest in the practical consequences of his studies." Right through the summer of 1944, magistrates and bureaucrats showed their determination to assert proper administrative control over statutory persecution. Once a measure had been taken, the state had spoken, the law was the law, bureaucratic routine worked to enforce it. The authors conclude that those Jews who were saved "owe nothing to the French authorities."

The German attempt to impose the wearing of the yellow star may show what they mean. The Germans intended the star to isolate its wearers in preparation for deportation and to segregate them in everyday life. In 1939, the Jews in German-occupied Poland had been ordered to wear a blue star of David. In September 1941 the order was extended to all the territories of the Reich. In December, the German Commander in France, acting on orders from Berlin, suggested to Vichy that all French Jews be made to wear the yellow star. Admiral Darlan thought that this would "profoundly shock French public opinion," and even provoke a swing in favor of "Israelites, who could be considered martyrs." So the Germans went ahead on their own.

In June 1942 all Jews over the age of six in the occupied zone were required to buy and wear the yellow star of David. In July, a series of ordinances prohibited Jews from swimming pools, restaurants, cafés, theaters, cinemas, concerts, music halls, markets, museums and exhibitions, libraries, sporting events, public parks, and more of the same. They could not use public phones, had to ride in the last car of the metro, and were only allowed to shop in the later afternoon, when most of the few goods available had run out. But Darlan had been right in warning against the measure, which evoked many ironic or hostile reactions. As Jean Marais said to Cocteau, observing the star-marked Jews on the Champs-Elysées, "When they win the war, they will make us wear false noses." There was little chance of that, but the widespread antipathy, and a concern that the French police, who faithfully enforced all other measures, might gibe at this one, prevented the Germans from extending the star to the southern zone even after they occupied it in November 1942. The Vichy government never imposed it, and the Germans did not insist. But, in December 1942, Vichy decided that all vital documents that a Jew might need—identity card, ration card, and work permit—should be stamped *Jew* or *Jewess*, an action which, while more discreet, cut even closer to the bone (a star could be unstitched) and proved of great help to the Germans.

When the Germans began systematic deportations and exterminations in 1942, Vichy's rival anti-Semitism offered them more substantial support than they found anywhere else in Europe, not excluding their own allies. The Rumanians under General Antonescu and the Hungarians, as long as Admiral Horthy remained in power, protected their native Jews more vigorously than did France, which

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became one of two European countries (Bulgaria was the other) to hand Jews over for deportation from areas Nazi Germany did not actually occupy.

If 1941 was, for the Germans, the year of decision, 1942 was the year of action. Drift and improvisation gave way to planning, and thorough preparations (turning in good part on railway schedules) also involved negotiations with the French authorities without whose aid the great murder plan could not be carried out. German negotiators were convinced that Laval would accept the wholesale removal of all Jews from France, including French citizens, if he could win concessions for the rest of France. We cannot really tell how far Laval was willing to go of his own accord, though he was certainly ready to rid himself of foreigners. And there were plenty of these. On March 27, 1942, 1,112 Jews were shipped off to Auschwitz in third-class carriages: the only deportees to escape the ordeal of freight cars before the massacre awaiting them in Poland (19 of this shipment returned after the war). But things could not really get going while rail cars were short and schedules uncertain, or before bureaucratic squabbles over who should bear the cost had been resolved. In the end, the reluctant French—reluctant to pay, that is, not to deliver—were charged for the deportees: 700 deutsche marks per head, plus "equipment and food for fifteen days after deportation," an item that vastly overestimated life expectancy after a departure that most Jews did not survive for more than four or five days. Arrangements would only be complete by summer, when the earlier policy of legislative harassment was replaced by police actions: roundups, internment, deportations.

The first great roundup of Jews in Paris, code-named *Vent Printanier* ("Spring Wind"), had been postponed forty-eight hours in order to avoid an embarrassing coincidence with the 14th of July, Bastille Day. Everything else went well, thanks to the efforts of police, gendarmes, and civilian volunteers, who herded 13,000 (including 4,000 children) into improvised detention centers within a few days. German reliance on the French police was not misplaced. Whether they were identifying Jews, arresting them at home or in the street, or providing up-to-date information from their remarkable files, the SS always acknowledged the "honorable conduct" of a service that gave them "exemplary assistance."

Drancy, a vast half-finished apartment complex in the dreary northeastern suburbs of Paris, near the airport of Le Bourget, was the chief antechamber to Auschwitz. Of 79 deportation trains between 1942 and 1944, 67 left from Drancy, carrying 67,000 of the nearly 75,000 Jews deported from French soil. Guarded by French gendarmes, administered by the *Préfecture*, nagged by CGQJ personnel, the detention center was as French as it could be. It lacked hygienic facilities, straw for mattresses, food, of course, and medical attention. Dachau, said a Vichy report, was nothing compared to Drancy. When, in 1943, the Germans took over its administration, though not its guard, conditions improved as brutality and cynicism replaced disease and near starvation. But the convoys went on leaving.

In August 1942, the mass arrests begun in Paris were extended to the as yet unoccupied zone. That was when French people still in a position to comment saw men, women, and children herded into cattle cars and began to look on Jews no longer as problems but as victims. The elderly, partially paralyzed archbishop of Toulouse spoke out in a pastoral letter to remind his flock that Jews and foreigners were "real men and women . . . part of the human species," who could not "be abused without limit." Few prelates joined him. Few other voices were heard. In any case, within a few days of Msgr. Saliège's daring statement, Laval decreed obligatory labor service (STO) for all young Frenchmen. The German war machine was guzzling manpower. With most German men in uniform, productivity came to depend increasingly on foreigners: almost four million as 1941 ended, over seven million in mid-1944 when one in five of the German work force being foreign was the foreshadowing of a *Gastarbeiter*. To this, the French, too, had to pay their tribute, and this is what they regarded as the *real* deportation. Conscription for the STO, introduced in February 1943, deflected attention from "lesser" concerns and turned even churchmen's eyes to their own flocks. Beginning in the winter of 1943, the Catholic hierarchy had little time to protest for any but their own. When they did look beyond them, they

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deplored "*the way* in which actions against the Jews are carried out," not the actions themselves.

By then, of course, the unoccupied zone was no more. In November 1942, three days after the Allied landings in North Africa, the Germans swept south and occupied it. At the same time, unwilling and unable to assume the burden of administering these new territories, they declared that the armistice continued in effect and the Vichy government remained sovereign, as before. It was a convenient arrangement. They needed the French police for roundups and deportations, police and militia to impose the STO and to fight the Maquis beginning to form in the STO's wake; and the French police continued to cooperate effectively with their German colleagues, just as the French guards continued to watch the detention centers and internment camps under their dubious care. Finally, the Jews' last refuge was overrun. By summer 1943, the small Italian-occupied zone in southeast France held 50,000 Jews, over half of them crowded along twenty miles of coast in the Alpes-Maritimes. In September 1943, after the Italian armistice, this shelter too was lost. A few hundred escaped to Italy, others were hidden by the local population, the greater part were trapped in a brutal manhunt, in which French and Germans worked hand in hand. The surprising thing, with no more haven left for the remainder of the war, is how many Jews survived. By the end of 1944, of the 350,000 in France four years before, 75,721 Jews and 2,825 non-Jewish men and women had been deported, of whom about 2,500 survived. Of those that died, one in three were French citizens, the rest foreign refugees. Nearly 2,000 of the deported were under six, more than 6,000 were under thirteen, 8,700 were sixty or over. But if 25 percent of the Jews in France went off to death camps, three in four did not, a record only bettered by Italy and Denmark. Vichy always justified collaboration as a way of mitigating losses and disorder. It seems fair to argue that their idea of cutting losses did not take Jewish losses into account and that they were prepared to disregard the interests of "others" to preserve their own. Yet something must have worked in favor of those "others," for so many to survive against such odds.

That something scarcely appears to have been public opinion. One can discern no massive repugnance toward Vichy's anti-Jewish program of 1940–42 to match the widespread evasion of the obligatory labor service in 1943. Hard times normally sharpen self-preserving tendencies, and these were very hard times indeed. Endemic shortages, high prices, personal and public disruptions, growing discomfort and insecurity reinforced the French tendency to clannishness, jealousy, suspicion, mistrust, and strife. Ordinary people had enough to do just making ends meet and keeping out of trouble. Those who set out to help themselves, if they did not gravitate to black-market operations, could just as easily join German or collaborationist enterprises. Jean Dutourd's now-classic *Au bon beurre* describes the irresistible ascent of a couple of grocers who make a vast fortune on black markets, denounce French to Germans and later Germans to French, and live to enjoy the rewards of vice. David Pryce-Jones's *Paris in the Third Reich: A History of the German Occupation, 1940–1944* refers to 6,000 original French volunteers for the German "auxiliary police," with five or ten times as many volunteering by the end of the war. Compared to such numbers, and those of volunteers for the Russian war, and those of collaborationist militants in colored shirts, and those of Darnand's murderous militia, the fabled Resistance shrinks to dubious dimensions. As Henri Michel, the chief historian of the French Resistance has recently written in *Paris-Allemand*: "If one wanted to earn one's living half-decently, one had to work for the Germans."

Some lived quite indecently decently. We shall never know how many, but they play a prominent role in David Pryce-Jones's book—whose splendid photographs and coffee-table allure cannot conceal excellent value for the money, especially in its anecdotes and interviews. One collaborator's widow assured Pryce-Jones that the German presence disturbed no one, that "the population easily accepted the occupation." Some of the population certainly did, and Corinne Luchaire was only one of 85,000 French women who had borne the offspring of German soldiers. (Less philoprogenitive Germans could resort to brothels; of Paris's 120, forty were reserved for German soldiers, four for officers, one for

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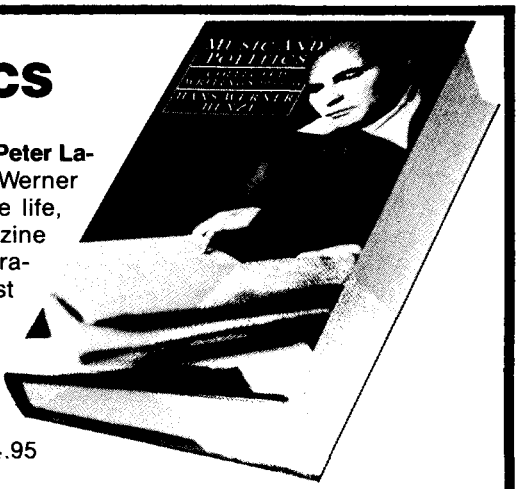

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generals.) But one need not agree with her views to appreciate her last point: "Paris had never been so brilliant culturally." Véronique Rebatet's husband, Lucien, an old drinking pal of Modigliani, was the author of the savage and disastrously readable *Les Décombres* (*The Ruins*) which sold a quarter of a million copies between its publication in 1942 and the end of the war. He was also a part of the brilliant team (R. Brasillach, P.-A. Cousteau, Drieu La Rochelle, and also Jean Fontenoy who died fighting in the Waffen-SS) that made the weekly *Je Suis Partout* the great journalistic success story of the time, with a circulation of 300,000. But the publishing industry as a whole was thriving. In 1943, at the height of the war, it led the world with 9,348 titles, compared with 8,320 published in the United States and 6,705 in Britain.

French cinema also enjoyed one of its most brilliant periods, not only qualitatively (a special hand to H. G. Clouzot's *Le Corbeau* of 1943, about a small town living under the terror of an anonymous letter writer, a film which got Clouzot into hot water after the Liberation) but quantitatively. With 225 full-length features and 400 documentaries and cartoons, the French did better than the Germans themselves. Theater also prospered, its box-office receipts in 1943 three times what they had been in 1938. Freedom of expression, though relative, does not seem to have been unduly restricted. When Alain Laubréaux, the critic of *Je Suis Partout*, panned a new Cocteau play, its star, Jean Marais, punched him in the nose (see Truffaut's *Le Dernier Metro* for a romanticized version). Sartre's *Les Mouches* was warmly received by the *Pariser Zeitung*. His *Huis Clos*, which opened on June 10, 1944, expressed the great lesson of the Occupation (but one the French had suspected long before): "Hell is other people."

It was certainly hell for most to scrounge enough food and warmth to keep body and soul together. But even that varied: "During the war," recalls the German sculptor Arno Breker, who visited Paris often, "you could eat as well as in peacetime." That might not be the case of university professors who earned a monthly salary equivalent to four pounds of butter. But that was in August 1944, when, following the Allied landings, butter had shot from 700 to 850 francs a kilo. That same month, just as the Germans evacuated Paris, the police went on strike, shrouding their collaborationist record in a heroic haze. But not all the strains of everyday life had grown worse: the birthrate rose; the death, murder, and suicide rates fell; in 1938, 38,000 were certified as mad; by 1943 those so certified numbered only 18,000. A few days after the Germans had left Paris, Kenneth Clark and John Rothenstein went over to see what they could pick up for the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery. "I suppose we imagined French collectors would be impoverished and anxious to sell their pictures," noted Clark ruefully. "Instead I found a sense of prosperity and social gaiety which made London seem very drab." That winter the French Ministry of the Interior received 125,000 letters claiming action in the Resistance.

Candidates for certification as Resistance members piled up thick as the leaves that strow the brooks in Vallombrosa: a late phenomenon and, often, a fake one. For a long time, resistance beyond the grumbling level remained exceptional. As late as June 1944, when the notorious Philippe Henriot was murdered by members of the Resistance, 400,000 people filed past his bier in four days. When tried for his many crimes, the infamous Henri Laffont, head of a French gang of Gestapo auxiliaries, declared only half ironically: "If the chaps on the other side, the resistance, had made me some sort of an offer, I would have taken it. . . . Only, at the time I never heard a thing about the resistance. . . . I never knew there was such a thing." While we may take this with a pinch of salt, the German officials whom Pryce-Jones interviewed seem to bear him out: "Cooperation was the order of the day," recalls one of them. "Nobody and nothing in France undermined our programs. Even with the French workers in Germany, there was peace right to the end." Another recalls the good relations with French colleagues, meetings "in a very friendly atmosphere" and in "the best of spirits." As for sabotage, there was little or none: "More dreadful things happen today in peacetime Cologne." As late as 1942, reported the German military commander, the French population persisted "in its apparently unshakable lethargy."

What changed this—to the extent that it changed—was the obligatory labor service.

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The Resistance was a noble enterprise but, as Henri Pourrat has remarked, "You need interests to sustain noble causes. The Resistance is first and foremost refusal of the STO." The Maquis was recruited among young men dodging a new kind of draft. So much the better. But principles, for most of them, had little to do with their decisions. Which may suggest why, to them as to the Allies, the fate of Jews was never a chief concern. The employees and administrators of the French railway system, who managed to thwart all sorts of German plans, never crossed the German deportation schedules on which the whole Jewish murder program hung. Even in the summer of 1944, *cheminot* resistance did not extend to sabotaging transports to Auschwitz, however they stood out. Not one convoy of Jewish deportees was ever derailed or interfered with.

But, then, we may well ask: What did the Resistance know about the Final Solution? They knew that over one million young Frenchmen were shipped to Germany to work there. They also knew that two million prisoners of war languished in German camps. Were the Jews really worse off than these? And did the men of Vichy know much more? Probably. Credible accounts of the murder camps were becoming available by late 1942, and these were soon being discussed in the Vatican (which largely ignored them), and in Allied circles. BBC broadcasts referred to them. But how widely was such information apprehended? Léon Blum emerged from Buchenwald unaware that gas chambers existed; the survivors of the Drancy convoys had had no inkling of what awaited them at Auschwitz. Few as they were, those who showed a sense of humanity or of horror remained largely uninformed of the high stakes involved. The Jews themselves, to whom so much influence, occult or overt, has been attributed, were helpless to do much to help themselves. The Allies looked upon them as a nuisance; the French as a negotiable (in)commodity. As a political factor they were negligible.

One must agree with Marrus and Paxton that, in the last analysis, what governed the success of the operation and the scale of Nazi killings was the degree to which the Germans were able to apply their power. So, if the ghastly totals fell short of SS expectations, this would be due not to humane interventions (no less meritorious when they happened) or even less to cunning Vichy maneuvers, but to failure of means to achieve the well-planned end. Himmler attributed the shortfall to "strained relations with the Wehrmacht." Others might cite the greater ease with which the more numerous and tightly grouped Jewish communities of Eastern Europe could be shipped to their extermination, and the logistical problems raised by the long railway journey from the West, on lines exposed to disruption by Allied bombing. No one has attributed it to interference by the French authorities. Indeed, as Marrus and Paxton conclude, without Vichy's cooperation, the Germans on their own could never have accomplished what they did, "would never have been able to take such a heavy toll of the Jews in France." As someone said about Marc Bloch, the great historian who died in the Resistance, denounced by a Frenchwoman: "He was a Jew much attached to France. The question is whether France deserved him."

The Happy Historian

THE LETTERS OF THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY. Volume 5: January 1849–December 1855. Volume 6: January 1856–December 1859. *Edited by Thomas Pinney. Cambridge University Press. $95.00 each volume.*

Reviewed by JOHN CLIVE

With these two volumes, covering the last ten years of Macaulay's life (1849–1859), this wonderful edition of his *Letters*, six volumes in all, reaches completion. I use the word *wonderful* advisedly. No lesser praise will do. For Professor Pinney has provided us with a model for such works. He has tracked down more than sixteen hundred letters never published before and given us for the first time the complete text of more than three hundred others. (The total number of letters contained in this edition amounts to 2,440.) His foot-

JOHN CLIVE, William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of History and Literature at Harvard, is the author of *Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian* and *Scotch Reviewers: "The Edinburgh Review," 1802–1815.*

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notes are neither too few nor too many. They show erudition and ingenuity of the highest order. All of them are helpful and illuminating. A good many of them may be read for amusement as well as instruction. His index, almost 180 pages long, makes every aspect of Macaulay's life and thought, as revealed in his letters, easily accessible to the reader. Any team of scholars might well pride itself upon having brought a work of this magnitude and complexity to completion in such an exemplary fashion. The fact that Professor Pinney did it on his own is cause for awed admiration.

What about the letters themselves? Professor Pinney has been criticized for including all those available to him; for not omitting replies to invitations, brief acknowledgments of gifts and felicitations, stock responses to inquiries and solicitations. To my mind, that criticism is misguided. The fact that he has included everything certainly means that one cannot be sure of opening a volume at any page and coming upon a gem. But it also means that as one reads through the letters in sequence, one receives a series of images and impressions that truly reflect the manner and shape of the historian's way of life from week to week—his shifting moods, the variety of his preoccupations, his routine of work and pleasures, as well as his triumphs and tribulations. The gems of Macaulay's letters have since been brought together in a single volume, as they deserve to have been (*The Selected Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay,* edited by Thomas Pinney, Cambridge University Press, $39.50). But these six volumes, as they stand, give us the man himself, or, rather, the man as he chose to reveal himself in his letters.

The distinction is an important one, particularly in the case of Macaulay who cherished his privacy more than most, and, in the course of his entire life, reserved his more intimate feelings for three correspondents: his favorite sisters, Hannah and Margaret, and, to a lesser extent, his only close friend, a learned lawyer named Thomas Flower Ellis. Ellis was one of the few who was aware of the effect on Macaulay's feelings and emotions in his (and the century's) mid-thirties of Margaret's and Hannah's getting married, and of Margaret's death, which followed not so long after her marriage. Macaulay, a lifelong bachelor, had been so fond of these two younger sisters, and they of him, that he at one point deluded himself into thinking that he might be able to set up house with them, and thus to prolong indefinitely the loving, bantering relationship he had maintained with them since their childhood. When events proved that this was out of the question, he almost collapsed under the blow.

But by 1855 Margaret had been dead for more than twenty years. As for Hannah, now Lady Trevelyan and the mother of Macaulay's beloved niece "Baba," she lived in London with her husband, Sir Charles. And her brother, who had remained close to her, saw her so frequently that there was little need for correspondence. Thus it is most appropriate that the frontispiece of volume 6 of the *Letters* consists of two Victorian photographs: a small one of "Baba," or, as she was to become, Margaret Trevelyan Holland, Lady Knutsford, and a very much larger one of Ellis.

But if one expects to find, even in the letters to Ellis, evidence of secret emotional turmoil or hidden anguish, one will look in vain. During the last decade of his life, Macaulay was not only a successful but a happy man. The first two volumes of *The History of England,* published in 1849, had marked a triumph unexampled in the history of English literature. The third and fourth volumes, published in 1855, scored a similar success. Those four volumes, as well as the collected *Essays* and *Speeches,* and the *Lays of Ancient Rome,* brought him wealth, honors, and an international reputation. In 1852 the electors of Edinburgh, who had rejected him in 1847, made amends by making him their representative in Parliament. Five years later he became Lord Macaulay, as a result of receiving the first peerage given solely for achievement in literature. In London he lived comfortably, first in the Albany on Piccadilly, then in his own house in Kensington, where he dined and breakfasted with whom he pleased, and received in ample measure the familial affection he craved from the Trevelyans, young and old.

Only the state of his health gave cause for concern. In 1852 he suffered a heart attack, and as a result, as he himself put it, he "became twenty years older in a week." From then on he became less and less of a public figure, and more and more of a valetudinarian as well as a private scholar and writer. He

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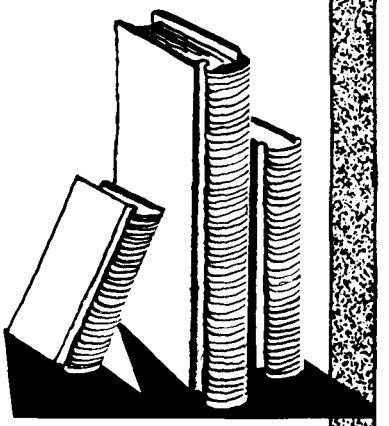

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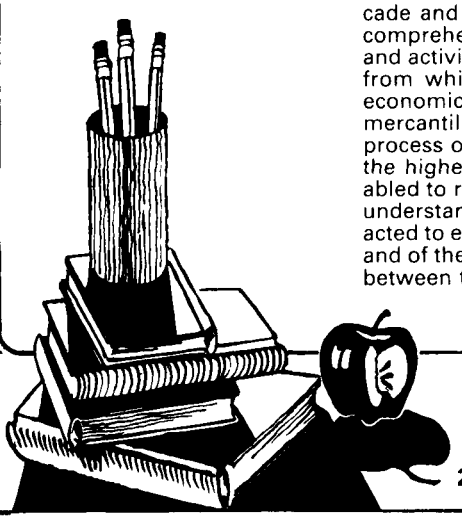

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resigned from Parliament in 1856 and, though he duly took his seat in the House of Lords, played almost no part in it. "I sometimes think," he wrote to his sister Frances early in 1856, "that I should very willingly barter some fame for a little better health, if such dealing were possible. Then I remember Addison's Mountain of Miseries, and ask myself whether I would consent to be thought a very middling writer on condition of breathing as freely as I did at twenty. There are moments when I might make such a bargain: but I should soon repent it, and long to change back again."

Macaulay clearly enjoyed being famous, though the pleasure was usually spiced with a dash of irony. "At last I have obtained true glory," he wrote to Ellis in 1849. "As I walked through Fleet Street the day before yesterday, I saw a copy of Hume at a bookseller's window with the following label. 'Only £2" 2" 0— Hume's History of England in eight volumes, highly valuable as an introduction to Macaulay.' I laughed so convulsively that the other people who were staring at the books took me for a poor demented gentleman. Alas for poor David!" Later that year, he reported to Frances that he had read a portion of his new manuscript to Hannah and Trevelyan, "with great effect. Hannah cried, and Trevelyan kept awake."

His own estimate of his work contained a similar mixture of praise with a pinch of salt. When the history of William III was more than half complete, in 1852, he told Frances that he would be sorry to leave it unfinished: "for, though it is very far from satisfying me, it is better than any book that we have, or that we seem likely to have, on that subject." And then he felt it necessary to go on to explain that there was no great vanity in saying this, since all those who had previously dealt with the subject had been wretched writers of history. His reaction to what little negative criticism the reviewers of the first two volumes brought forward varied from stubbornness (when he thought he was right) to the, for him, remarkable admission that "I got into a passion with the Stuarts . . . and consequently did less damage than I should have done if I had kept my temper." That sentence no doubt supplies ammunition for those historians of our own time who attack Macaulay's *History* as a biased work, flawed by Whiggish prejudice. But we are sufficiently skeptical today of the claims of scientific objectivity, so that it comes as something of a relief to find one of the great practitioners of the craft freely admitting to having fallen into a passion with his subject. It can certainly be said for Macaulay that he never made any bones about where he stood.

It was that uninhibited and resounding certainty that had led Lord Melbourne to remark that he wished he could be as cocksure about anything as Tom Macaulay seemed to be about everything. At its best, the certainty was buttressed by a sturdy common sense that, like Dr. Johnson's ripostes to Boswell, is as endearing as it is telling. More than once it makes its appearance to good effect in these letters. Thus, on the question as to whether Bunyan should have a monument in Westminster Abbey: "You might as well blame the Russians for not erecting monuments to our brave fellows who were killed at the Alma as blame the Dean and Chapter of Westminster for not erecting a monument to a man who was the enemy of the religious society to which they belonged. His place in heaven has nothing to do with the matter. . . . A man in heaven has no right to have his arms at Windsor unless he was a Knight of the Garter. A man in heaven has no right to have his portrait at Holyrood unless he was a King of Scotland. And a man in heaven has no right to a monument in the transept of a Church, unless he was a Churchman." On the question of whether schoolboys learning Greek should have recourse to translations: "If there be a rule against translations at Harrow, it is a bad rule; and the more the boys break it the better. Deception there can be none. I defy any boy to use a translation in such a way as to prevent his masters from finding out whether he really understands the Greek or not."

Perhaps, best of all, on the question of whether Macaulay, as an unidentified correspondent had apparently suggested, had tried in the first two volumes of the *History* to appeal to prurient imaginations:

> I cannot admit that a book like mine is to be regarded as written for female boarding schools. I open a school for men. I teach the causes of national prosperity and decay: and the particular time about which I write is a time when profligacy, having been compelled during some years to wear the

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mask of hypocrisy, had just thrown that mask away, and stood forth with a brazen impudence of which there is scarcely any other example in modern society. How is it possible to treat a subject like mine without inserting a few paragraphs,—perhaps there may be, in my two thick volumes, two pages,—which it would be better that a young lady should not read aloud? . . . I am not aware that there is a single line in my work which can sully the imagination of anybody who is in the habit of listening to the morning and evening lessons at Church.

The recipients of those letters were certainly not left in any doubt about Macaulay's views. Nor are readers of the letters left in any doubt about his judgments of other writers. Praed? "He was a wonderful boy at seventeen; and a wonderful boy he continued to be till he died at near forty." Carlyle? "If he goes away [from the water cure] writing common sense in good English, I shall declare myself a convert to hydropathy. At present I believe that Doctor and patients are quacks alike." Wordsworth's *Prelude*? "It is the Excursion, weaker and more tedious." La Motte Fouqué's *Sintram*? "Trash, as unmeaning as the History of Jack and the Bean Stalk, and a great deal duller. . . . There is an age at which we are disposed to think that whatever is odd and extravagant is great. At that age we are liable to be taken in by such essayists as Carlyle, such orators as Irving, such painters as Fuseli, such plays as the Robbers, such romances as Sintram. A better time comes, when we would give all Fuseli's hobgoblins for one of Reynolds's little children, and all Sintram's dialogues with Death and the Devil for one speech of Mrs. Norris or Miss Bates."

Some of those judgments may strike us as misguided. But even if that is the case, we can hardly fail to be moved by Macaulay's laudatory mode, reflecting as it does his deep and abiding affection for the great classics. "I am glad that you are properly interested about the siege of Syracuse," he writes his nephew, George Otto Trevelyan. "The seventh book of Thucydides is the finest piece of history in the world. Livy, Tacitus, Sallust, Xenophon, vanish before it. It is absolutely perfect." As for Homer: "What a privilege genius like his enjoys," he writes from Malvern to his niece in 1851. "I could not tear myself away. I read the last five books [of the *Iliad*] at a stretch during my walk to day, and was at last forced to turn into a by path, lest the parties of walkers should see me blubbering for imaginary beings, the creations of a ballad-maker who has been dead two thousand seven hundred years. What is the power and glory of Caesar and Alexander to that?" Has anyone ever communicated love of literature more forcefully? I doubt it.

Macaulay feared democracy and revolution—they were linked in his mind—as much as he loved the classics. That fear emerges in his comment on his June (1848) days in Paris, to the effect that "had I been in Cavaignac's place at that time I would have made such an example of the rabble of the Faubourg St. Antoine that the ears of all the world should have tingled." It emerges even more eloquently in his famous letter (1857) to the American historian H. S. Randall, whom he assured that he had long been convinced that "institutions purely democratic must, sooner or later, destroy liberty, or civilisation, or both." In France, despotism, a silent tribune, an enslaved press had succeeded revolution: "Liberty is gone: but civilisation has been saved." Were a democratic government to arrive in England, the effect would be the same: "Either the poor would plunder the rich, and civilisation would perish; or order and property would be saved by a strong military government, and liberty would perish." The trouble with the American Constitution was that it was "all sail and no anchor." Inevitably, the United States would confront a season of adversity that would result in successive waves of spoliation and distress. Either some Caesar or Napoleon would then seize the reins of government; or the American Republic would be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth, "with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country by your own institutions." Reading this letter brings home the extent to which Macaulay's eloquent advocacy of the Reform Bill of 1832 sprang from fear of what would happen if no concessions were made, as well as the extent to which his Whiggism was as much anti-democratic as it was libertarian.

Oddly enough, none of the letters he wrote during the last ten years of his life contains

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reminiscences of the great Reform Bill days. But they do contain vivid glimpses of other, more private aspects of his life. "When I was a boy," he writes to Frances, "no human being doubted that Buonaparte was a principal subject of the prophecies of the old Testament. I was not born when he went into Egypt. But I have heard my father say that the prophets were then wilder than he ever remembered them." There are other memories: of riding, in June 1834, through the mango park at Arcot in the Carnatic; of listening attentively to Sydney Smith, who assumed, as did so many of Macaulay's contemporaries, that the only sound he could tolerate was that of his own voice. But perhaps the most significant reminiscence concerns his stern, Evangelical schoolmaster, Matthew Preston. Commenting on the "escapade" of one of Preston's daughters, as described in a *Life* of Wilberforce, Macaulay tells his sister Selina: "If her father managed her as he managed me, her freaks were the natural effects of his discipline." That sentence conjures up, in just a few words, the image later so memorably depicted in his nephew's *Life and Letters* of his uncle: of the brilliantly gifted young Tom chafing under and rebelling against the relentless discipline imposed on him by his father and his teachers. Much of the special nature of his later achievements and a good deal of the shape his character and personality were to assume were derived from this conflict.

But the most revealing letter of all in these two volumes appears in the appendix containing "additional letters from the period 1831–1848." It was written from India in February 1835 and addressed to his old Cambridge friend John Moultrie, who had commemorated Macaulay's late, beloved sister Margaret in a poem entitled "To Margaret in Heaven." It should be remembered that by the time Moultrie's poem reached Macaulay, his other favorite sister, Hannah, was married to Trevelyan. This, in part, is what Macaulay writes:

> My sisters have been everything to me. But for them the violence of my passions, and the peculiar circumstances in which I have been placed, would have made me a libertine and political adventurer. To my two younger sisters I owe it that neither voluptuousness nor ambition have, as I think, impaired the stamina of my character, and that I am, if anything, more open-hearted and more susceptible of the kind affections than I was in our college days. But the affection of brothers for sisters, blameless and amiable as it is beyond almost any human affection, is yet so liable to be interrupted that no man ought to suffer it to become necessary to him. I did not consider this.

Then he went on to tell Moultrie that Hannah's society and affection were the greatest comfort to him; that she, Trevelyan, and Macaulay himself resided together, and formed a most harmonious family.

There is a curious irony in the fact that this extraordinary letter, published here for the first time in full, appears in the sixth volume just thirty-five pages after another letter, written by Macaulay almost twenty-five years later, in October 1859. In that letter he tells Ellis that Hannah and her daughter Alice had decided to join Trevelyan in Madras, where he had accepted the post of governor. "I cannot deny that it is right," Macaulay writes, "and my duty is to avoid whatever can add to the pain which they suffer. But I am very unhappy, so unhappy that I heartily wished when Stephenson's hearse passed through the Park on Friday, that I could change places with him." Professor Pinney informs us that on the day after Hannah broke the news of her departure to him—by letter, since she did not dare break it in person—Macaulay wrote in his journal: "I wish I were dead." His wish was granted two months later.

Bad News

AMONG THE BELIEVERS: AN ISLAMIC JOURNEY. *By V. S. Naipaul. Knopf. $15. Paper, $5.95.*

Reviewed by MANGOL BAYAT

V. S. Naipaul is not a scholar. Nor is he well acquainted with Islam or Islamic culture and history. But he is a gifted novelist and an observer of the so-called Third World, about which he has written extensively. Born in Trinidad, into a family of Hindu emigrants from India, and now living in England, where his works have won critical acclaim and literary prizes, he has long been noted for his ability to view his own society and others like

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it with a cool objectivity. Both Naipaul's choice of subject matter and his views have aroused controversy. He is hailed as one of the great writers of our time by some and fiercely denounced by others as an "anglicized" intellectual who has forgotten his own roots and is now using his pen to collaborate with the imperialist West in the general indictment of the Third World.

Often the response of critics to Naipaul's writings has nothing to do with literary judgment, as he himself observed in 1958 when the *Daily Telegraph*, reviewing his first novel, said he looked "down a long Oxford nose" at the land of his birth, while of the same book the *Evening Standard* noted that he writes of his native land "with warm affection." Indeed the majority of his reviewers, especially the hostile ones who savagely cut his work to pieces, project their own ideological prejudices upon it. For Naipaul's work, fiction and nonfiction alike, provokes political value judgments. His most recent book, *Among the Believers*, is on yet another sensitive, potentially explosive topic, which the author, when he conceived the notion of writing about it, had to know was bound to create even greater controversies.

From the literary point of view, *Among the Believers* is no great work of art, falling far short of the author's own established high standards. It seems hastily written; it is repetitive, in parts shallow, full of factual inaccuracies and historical errors. It provides his ideological-minded opponents with enough ammunition to attack him more ferociously than ever and gleefully to demonstrate his so-called Western bias against the Third World. Yet to the dispassionate reader and to the genuine friend of the Muslims who wish to transcend ideological rhetoric, Naipaul's lengthy report of his journey contains amazing insights and reveals compassion and an understanding of the anguish and hope of the Muslims he met in his travels.

Naipaul deals with three broad themes: the way Muslims view themselves; revolutionary Islam; and the contradictory Islamic rejection of, and yet dependence upon, the West. All three themes are related to the more general matters of the cultural rootlessness of secularly educated modern Muslims and the national anxiety gripping the Islamic world in the late twentieth century. People are Naipaul's subject. Through his journeys in four Muslim countries—Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia—he met as many individuals as he could (and as he was allowed to) of different social backgrounds and status. He conversed with them, challenged them to reveal their true selves, sensed their feelings, saw through their rhetorical utterances, and sized them up—along the way producing sketches that are stunning in their accuracy and the hidden truth they expose to light.

With the novelist's ability to note fine details often overlooked by social scientists and journalists, Naipaul presents a rich panorama of Muslim men. (Very few women are written about in *Among the Believers*.) There is Sadeq whom Naipaul briefly encountered in Tehran: "a small man on the rise . . . the kind of man who, without political doctrine, only with resentments, had made the Iranian Revolution." There is Behzad, the Iranian radical student who had no religious faith, whose communism was like a version of the Shia faith, accepting the religious idea of martyrdom to which he added a political meaning. There is Mr. Ahmad of Pakistan, "a penitent . . . who had lived loosely as a young man . . . had come late to religion and was now consumed by it . . . was awed by his own faith." There is Nusrat, the intelligent Pakistani journalist, full of personal anxieties, who dreams of studying in a Western university to get a degree in mass communication and work for an international organization as a consultant for Third World media. There is Sharif, the Malay leader of a Muslim Youth Organization, educated in a Christian missionary school, and working in the capital, who "grieved for the village life he had known," a life that still existed for the men who remained there but about which he spoke "as something in the past, something he could revive for himself only in a commune," not realizing that it was he who had changed and that his Islam was "revolutionary [,] serving no cause" that these men in the village could understand.

These men and others like them helped Naipaul create a general portrait of certain types of contemporary Muslims who are taking part in the Islamic Revivalist movement. As Naipaul observes, their call for an Islamic state is not motivated by a religious sentiment alone, but also by a desire for self-definition

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and assertion. He shows how a heightened self-awareness, and a sense of cultural rootlessness owing to their modern secular education, leads many current-day Muslims into "questioning the value of the kind of person" they had become, and into "denying themselves." Secularism, Naipaul notes, was perceived as worldly, atheistic, Western, non-Islamic; so contemporary Muslims turn to the religion that they had disregarded and that now seems to hold "a promise of imminent triumph." Quietly but devastatingly he points out the confused abstraction that characterizes their conception of an Islamic state modeled after the state created fourteen centuries ago by the Prophet Muhammed.

To the great annoyance of his guides and hosts, Naipaul often appeared arrogant, intolerant, quick to judge and to condemn what did not appeal to his Westernized rational mind and values. When he dismissed a village educational commune he visited in Indonesia as a bad school where people are "playing at being villagers," his host, deeply hurt, promptly retorted, "You cannot spend fifteen minutes in a place and make up your mind about it. . . . I don't think you understood what you saw." Doubtless Naipaul failed to grasp the advantages of such a "deschooling" approach to village education. His harsh criticism of the system, however, is firmly based on moral convictions. He feels that the idea of the village educational commune is "no more than the idea of the community of low skills, an abuse of the poor." Yet behind this harsh criticism there is a compassion for the people, a feeling that they deserve better than what is given them by their leaders.

Similarly, Naipaul is highly critical of Islamic fundamentalism, which he correctly sees as taking rapid root in the university, because the students from provincial and peasant backgrounds find that "the old faith comes more easily than any new-fangled academic system." He realizes the social power of an Islamic ideology, which does not alienate and therefore does not create potentially explosive tensions. With brutal frankness, he describes how Islamic ideology soothes and subdues the spirit of Muslim youth, who have great aspirations, and concludes: "To deny education can become the approved educated act." And here Naipaul is able to contrast the Islam of the glorious past, which had opened itself to the learning of the world, with the fundamentalism of today, which "provides an intellectual thermostat, set low." He realistically perceives that what faith can supply in Pakistan and Iran at the moment are "simple negatives that [answer] emotional needs"—no alcohol, no feminine immodesty, no dissent.

One fundamental weakness of *Among the Believers* lies in Naipaul's apparent inability to separate Islamic faith from contemporary Islamic political movements. Hence he was unprepared to distinguish what he was told, and what he saw being done in the name of Islam, from the universal faith. Consequently, many of the confusions, abstractions, and inconsistencies that he so mercilessly depicts are taken to be general characteristics of Islam rather than of Islamic political leaders. He often mistook what many told him for their true beliefs and misjudged his sources by taking their contradictory, shallow, deliberately evasive statements at face value. This is particularly the case in his encounters in Iran—with Ayatollah Shirazi in Qum and Ayatollah Shariatmadari in Mashhad. Both impressed him with their personal dignity and the awesome charismatic aura they emanated, to the extent that he was forced to acknowledge: "Faith like this, faith in the faith, faith in the guidance of the good man, made the revolution." However, he failed to appreciate the language barrier and to recognize the intricate caution traditionally adopted by such high-ranking religious leaders, who scarcely ever reveal their true thought, or position, in public. And so Naipaul rushed to conclude: "After the splendor of the man himself, Shariatmadari had little to say."

More often than not, the spokesmen for Islam themselves are responsible for the confusion and contradictions that so irritated Naipaul. While visiting the village educational commune in Indonesia, he realized that his guides told him things they thought he wanted to hear. First, assuming he was Muslim, they gave him the "Muslim side"; later, assessing him differently, they gave him "modern-sounding words: cooperatives, no élites, unstructural." An intelligent Indonesian economist candidly admitted to him that he spoke differently to different people. With government officials he talked "facts, figures, plans and studies"; with Naipaul he was more

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personal, but on his guard. He remarked: "You are not a scientist. You want to find out about me. You are playing a game of chess with me. So I talk to you on the other side." And the sophisticated economic advisor to the Indonesian government, the prominent member of the establishment in his country, spoke of the injustice committed in his society, of the need to cleanse through violence, and declared: "Islam can become a cocaine. It makes you high. You go to that mosque and you get high. And when you get high, everything that happens becomes Allah's will."

Who is to be blamed for this sort of verbal extravaganza? Naipaul who reports it, or those who fed it to him? What importance should one attach to it? Remembering the 1965 bloodbath, where reportedly half-a-million leftists were killed in Indonesia, Naipaul provides a chilling answer by describing the reaction of the Indonesian economist: "His rage was real; and his fantasy of violence could become a reality. Nineteen-sixty-five had occurred." The brutality of an Islamic government can match a military junta's. Since Naipaul's winter in Tehran in 1979, the violence and bloodshed of Khomeini's regime has added credibility to Naipaul's prediction that the frantic quest for the Islamic ideal could lead to senseless destruction, and to violations of the very divine justice in the name of which the old order was dismantled.

One can argue that the Indonesian economist and others like him are true advocates of a just social order, and one should not doubt the authenticity of their cause even if they may be engulfed by the more destructive element of the movement. Secularly educated professionals and lay Muslim progressives had fully supported the Iranian revolution, which Naipaul had termed the twin revolution, "appearing to flow together yet distinct." Their failure lay in their shortsightedness and intellectual self-delusion, two characteristics Naipaul had early detected and was disturbed by. Eager to ride the tide of religious fervor, which overtook the masses in response to Khomeini's messianic appeal, they spoke the language of the clerics, blending, and in the process distorting, both their own and Khomeini's views.

Naipaul at times expresses a belief in the potential of Islamic fervor to become creative and revolutionary and to "take men on to a humanism beyond religious doctrine." He went so far as to admit that, out of the backward looking Islamic Revival, "there would remain in many Muslim countries . . . the idea of modern revolution." If such glimpses of hope are rare in *Among the Believers*, the fault lies not in the author but in the political system of those countries he visited, where the voice of Muslim rationalism was being silenced and reactionary fundamentalism was stifling the effort of the progressives. The problem with Naipaul is that he was able to foresee such disastrous consequences and courageously to sound the alarm. That history has proven him right will not make him any more persuasive to his many detractors.

Disappearing in Circles

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ART. *By Arnold Hauser, translated by Kenneth J. Northcott. University of Chicago Press. $37.50.*

Reviewed by PETER CONRAD

Like Coleridge's world-circumnavigating sessions of table talk, which left his auditors agape yet mystified by the evanescence of all that erudition into air, Arnold Hauser's vast *Sociology of Art*, belying its bulk, seems to lift off from the earth and vanish into abstraction. It is not a critical study at all but a triumphal transcending of its subject, a feat of dialectical conjury that gathers up all forms of art and all periods of history—medieval polyphony to the Beatles, cave painting to pop—and dematerializes them, as Coleridge would do, into spirit.

This is the dialectician's tactic: the power to levitate out of circumstance. Hauser notes that the composer in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* dreams up the tune of Bacchus's aria while watching a backstage spat and that the motifs for a string quartet are dispensed to Schubert from a rusty coffee grinder. In his own argumentation, Hauser effects similar ascents, and he imparts his secret in a phrase arcane enough to merit italics: *"The process is dialectical."* A Marxist project—investigating

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The Conscience of the University and Other Essays by Harry Huntt Ransom

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Perhaps no other educator has contributed so much to his university and to education in general as Harry Huntt Ransom. From 1935 until his death in 1976, he served The University of Texas System in positions ranging from instructor through a variety of administrative posts culminating in chancellor in 1961. During those years, Ransom accomplished many of his dreams for the university, including the building of a world-renowned library.

The essays included here reflect the problems of a turbulent age, but Ransom's approach was always objective, philosophic, and far-sighted. Issues of concern then are still issues of concern today, and Ransom's thinking—on the role of the university in society, the student and teacher as principals in the education process, the focus and needs of specific disciplines, and their relationship to the world at large—still speaks to us. In these essays we see the force of reasoning and grace of style for which Ransom was so widely admired. This is a book of lasting importance.

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the social and economic determinants of art—is here conducted according to Hegelian logic, which means that, rather than ending in an excavation of the material base of creativity, it erects for itself ever more ethereal superstructures. Instead of demythologizing art, it devises a mythology of its own.

The dialectical motive announces itself in the tortuousness of Hauser's expository procedure. His demonstration won't, he says, advance in a straight line but will uncoil itself in a spiral or circle. Like Coleridge, he will move around the object under review, "instead of making a beeline for it," and will eventually travel on a grander and more cosmic tour around what he calls "the totality of life," comprehending the world by allusively containing it. The metaphor of the spiral, used at the outset, recurs in Hauser's account of Dickens's reputation, whose upsets become a dialectical revving up. The spiral, like a spring, accumulates energy within itself and readies itself for take-off: "Dickens's popularity, his undeserved disparagement and his repeated recognition follow immediately upon each another in a sort of spiral, which surrounds its object and becomes visible from a constantly shifting standpoint rather than revealing itself from an ever higher level." That sentence innocently confides Hauser's entire intention. First he wants, on his circular route, to see things from a relativistic sequence of angles. Then, dialectically energizing the circle upward as a spiral and cycling off into eternity aboard it, he wants to see them from successively higher levels.

In effect this means that all his critical arguments expire in paradoxes, since the paradox is the dialectical mystery of the circle as spiral: a truth that seems to go round self-controvertingly in a circle, but which is actually graduating to a higher wisdom as it goes. Hauser hails the paradox as the principle—and the esoteric spirit—of contradiction, which enables a series of sages (Plato, Tertullian, Descartes, Leibniz, and Kierkegaard among them) to approach omnipotence with only fallible human reason to aid them. It serves the same purpose in Hauser's humbler case. After pondering the evidence for both sides of a problem, he can end by declaring the opposites simultaneously true. This happens with his discussion of the contradiction between the notion that art is spontaneously engendered and the countering theory that it is conventionally ordained, and in his rehearsal of the issue of heredity versus environment. It allows him to decide, after toiling to separate the individual's motives from the needs of society, that the two are "historically and systemically indivisible." Here it saves him by accomplishing a merger; generally, however, it permits him to retire from argument through the gap opened up by a contradiction. The first such paradox—the one that asserts itself throughout the book as a sort of leitmotiv and to which indeed these hundreds of pages might be reduced—is, of course, Hegel's: "The work of art belongs and does not belong to the author." Though Hauser's proclaimed intention is to confer a "scientific validity" on sociological criticism, his actual destination is this philosophical dead end. Enskied on one of those higher levels he invokes in his reference to Dickens, he can look down on the massed artistic phenomena he appraises and see them in two contrary ways at once. Art is a product of society; society is also a product of art. The self-referring circle—within whose ambit Hauser travels in a chapter that, he says, Friedrich von Schlegel might have subtitled "The Understanding of Understanding"— becomes an infinitely self-reproducing cycle. Here the paradox that keeps the process going is Marx's rule that "consumption creates the urge to production."

Soaring above actual cases, Hauser has written a metacritique. Its origins lie in romanticism—in the critical theologies of Schlegel, Coleridge, and even Hazlitt, who, in his lectures on poetry, rigs up a universal genealogy for the art extending from the glad youth of the animate world in Homer to the cerebral death of nature in Wordsworth. As the romantics yearned, in Hauser's own phrase, to transcend "normal reality," so Hauser sociologizes art in order to get beyond it. He, too, like Hazlitt in those lectures that summarize the history of poetry so as to supersede it, endowing criticism with metacriticism's role as the enduring, immaterial conscience of an art now defunct, begins at the beginning of the world—speculating about "the change which took place in the climatic condition of the then inhabited zones at the Ice Age"—and ends with the world's and art's contemporary exhaustion. His last chapters are about our

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impending historical crisis and its silencing of art. He writes as that emblematic romantic figure, the lone solipsistic wanderer (like the hero of Mary Shelley's apocalyptic fable *The Last Man*) in the global, wall-less museum of *Weltliteratur*. He is the critic who has absorbed the world into his own myriad-minded brain but finds himself, after the engorgement has occurred, looking out at a vacancy. On the last page of Hauser's book, the crevices of contradiction in his paradoxes yawn open and threaten to become a gulf consuming him and his entire enterprise. He steadies himself on the edge by recalling another salutary contradiction: silence (which is, in any case, about to overtake Hauser since the book ends here) is, he says, a temptation "in times of social and cultural crisis," but it is one he has, up to this point, valiantly resisted. "We are protected to the end against actually falling silent by the gap between socialization and total alienation, between spiritual health and confusion." The dialectic here is as desperately unavailing as that other German mental power that it so much resembles, the romantic irony of Jean Paul Richter. The ironist magnifies himself by contemplating his own infinite littleness; Hauser avoids the abyss of contradiction by looking down into it. And with that gaze into a problem he still hasn't, after 761 pages, solved, his book does succumb, despite itself, by going silent.

His compensation is that by now the self-aggrandizing mythic dimensions of his endeavor have become clear. He is casting himself as the solitary critical conscience of the world, achieving a final resumé of all artistic phenomena. The purpose of all these prior artistic productions is to contribute to the volume that houses them and then dialectically outdoes them: Hauser's own *Sociology of Art*. Metacriticism is art's Second Coming, the critic's assumption of power (predicted by Wilde's dialogues and by Arnold's promise that the future of criticism will be immense) as the ultimate artist. All critics except Hauser are, in his view, writing mere propaganda. What he calls "newspaper critics" are the hirelings of "the system they serve." The academics are similarly, though more discreetly, eager-to-please wage-slaves, propitiating an "establishment which decides who is to fill university chairs." The collective purpose of these hacks is, in Hauser's Marxist reading, a commercial one. They are the creatures of a market economy: their praises bestow value, which means price, on an artist. And by inflating the worth of artists, they are conniving at their own journalistic or academic promotion. Reviewers are to him indistinguishable from dealers who trade in paintings or admen who write lyric anthems to commodities. Hauser alone—writing without academic subsidy and proudly spurning the simplification, compression, and currency of journalism—preserves his integrity by retreating to his Hegelian aerie, and this disdainful fortitude enables him to integrate the world beneath him, as he does in *The Sociology of Art*.

The book contains a prophecy about the artist's nature and his role in society. Of that prophecy, Hauser himself is presented as the fulfillment. The first artists are anonymous: voices predating individuation. But increasingly the artist is singled out from the company of his fellows, until his contemporary destiny is to be unfriended, dispossessed, alien. "Today there is, so to speak, no more folk-art, because, as has been said, there is no more 'folk.' " There is only the exiled artist. But that artist has, as Hauser remarks, the art of the past on his conscience. To defend the individuality that is his agony but also his existential prerogative, he must differentiate himself from the preempting, predestining past by rearranging it: "Anyone who wanted to rescue his threatened self and preserve his self-respect had to avoid anything that had existed previously." Hence the romantic rewriting of literary history; and hence Hauser's succession to that romantic vocation.

With a contradictoriness that satisfies his need to die on a paradox, he both rejoices in his alienation and overcomes it by subsuming the world in his own mind. He avoids "anything that had existed previously" by knowing everything that has existed previously. He is the critic as artist rendering art itself obsolete. Art's demise, which he discusses toward the end of his book, is metacriticism's resurrection. Thus he discounts Marshall McLuhan, whose response to crisis is retraction, the electronic reconvening of that vanished "folk." McLuhan shrinks the globe to a cozy, technologically hot, village. Hauser meanwhile dilates—with the aid of those dialectical mind-expanders that Carlyle remembers

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Coleridge exercising with before his episodes of cosmic reverie—to comprise the globe. His criticism purports to be universal, yet the globe it engirdles in *The Sociology of Art* is no larger than Hauser's own admittedly capacious brain. Abstractly remote from actual cases, his book is of sadly little interest as criticism. Its meaning is elsewhere. It ends with Hauser's meditation on Beckett's *Endgame*, and it is itself an end game, both for Hauser and for the critical dialectics of his genie, Hegel.

Lionel Trilling in Retrospect

LIONEL TRILLING: MIND AND CHARACTER. *By Edward Joseph Shoben, Jr. Frederick Ungar. $13.50.*

THE WORKS OF LIONEL TRILLING. *Uniform Edition, 12 volumes. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.*

Reviewed by ROBERT LANGBAUM

Edward Joseph Shoben's book is the third so far on Lionel Trilling to have appeared since Trilling's death in 1975 at the age of seventy; and there are numerous other books on Trilling in preparation. What makes the work of some few critics, fewer even than poets and novelists, survive their deaths? The answer is partly, I think, style; a critical work like a poem survives, in Auden's phrase, "in the valley of its saying." Of all his brilliant contemporaries in criticism, Lionel Trilling calls most attention to his style because it is so out of touch with the terse, nervous prose of the mid-twentieth century. Its slow ceremonious quality, less energetic than the prose of his model, Matthew Arnold (Trilling was a slow laborious writer like Pater), seems to set Trilling—despite the polemical intent of his writing—above the fierce partisanships of the moment, to connect his polemics with the great tradition of English prose, and to establish him already as addressing future generations.

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The twelve-volume edition of Trilling's works, now completed in the United States and also published in Great Britain by Oxford University Press, reprints Trilling's eight published books and collects most of his hitherto uncollected papers. Such monumentalization suggests that Trilling's work will be around awhile, even though it runs counter to current critical trends—especially the structuralist-deconstructionist trend which emphasizes the self-referential nature of literature and language. Trilling's aim, instead, as he put it in *Beyond Culture* (1965), was

> to see literary situations as cultural situations, and cultural situations as great elaborate fights about moral issues, and moral issues as having something to do with gratuitously chosen images of personal being, and images of personal being as having something to do with literary style.

Trilling was never content to think of himself as addressing only other literary people; and he influenced us, his graduate students at Columbia, to take a similarly broad view of literary criticism. It is indicative of Trilling's widespread appeal that Shoben is not professionally literary but a clinical psychologist. Dr. Shoben, whose main concern is Trilling's thought, rightly identifies it as deriving from Matthew Arnold, the subject of Trilling's doctoral dissertation and first book (1939). Trilling's intellectual biography of Arnold is powerful, I think, because of its autobiographical element—because Trilling found in Arnold the answer to his own problem and that of other intellectuals of the thirties who, having once believed in Marxism and the Russian Revolution, later became disillusioned. Arnold's critique of liberalism helped free Trilling from the fellow-traveling mentality—he was involved in Communist fringe activities during 1932 and 1933—which considered communism the inevitable goal of the liberal direction. As a liberal, Arnold understood the faults of liberals as his own tendencies and thus gave Trilling his lifelong subject—the critique of liberalism from within, by a liberal.

But Arnold's opponents were not Communists; they were mainly middle-class supporters of free-market capitalism in whom he tried to instill a respect for the state and the public interest. In explaining Arnold's thought, Trilling was helping prepare the twentieth-cen-

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tury mind that would accept the welfare state rather than communism as the alternative to untrammeled capitalism. Trilling's first collection of essays, *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), made for literary essays an extraordinary impact because it was involved in the struggle of American liberals after World War II to disengage themselves from the fellow-traveling mentality in order to support American opposition to Stalin's expansionism.

Trilling learned from Arnold to prefer to an over-moralistic activism an aesthetic "disinterestedness" that plays with ideas without demanding their immediate translation into practice, that distinguishes between the realms of ideas and practice and sees in culture the fluid ground of their interaction. He learned to prefer to systems and ideologies the literary mode of discourse, because only literature takes into account the complexities of human nature. He learned the phrase that explains his critical method: "literature is a criticism of life."

Dr. Shoben encapsulates Trilling's main ideas through his chapter titles. The title "The Honest Place 'Between' " takes off from Trilling's statement, "Between is the only honest place to be," which illustrates Arnold's notion that the critic's function in a liberal society is to point out the evidence contradicting the prevailing system of ideas—not in order to destroy that system but to help it evolve beneficially. Trilling made a career of living with contradictions, and he praised literature as the mode of discourse that takes into account more contradictions than any other.

The chapter title "Imagination and Reality" alludes to *The Liberal Imagination*, in which Trilling fights Stalinism by way of literary taste. At a time when liberals still condemned Henry James as snobbishly aristocratic, Trilling argued for a change of taste from the favored Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson to James. For James saw an interchange between self and reality; he believed in the efficacy of mind to transform reality and thus raise life—as Trilling quotes him in the essay on *The Princess Casamassima*—to its "richest and noblest expression." But "the chronic American belief," says Trilling (in "Reality in America," his essay on Dreiser), is "that there

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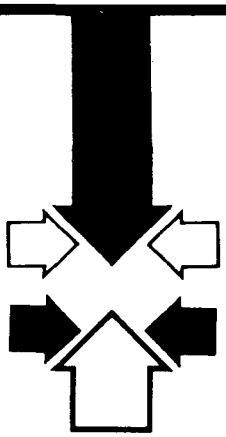

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exists an opposition between reality and mind and that one must enlist oneself in the party of reality"—reality being "always material reality, hard, resistant, unformed, impenetrable, and unpleasant." Such a view can lead to communism, which sees the self as completely determined by the society deriving from such impenetrable material reality.

Dr. Shoben does not dwell on this aspect of *The Liberal Imagination* but on Trilling's anti-Stalinist conclusion that the self must to some degree be alienated from society in order to judge society and enjoy its own freedom. The idea is also discussed in the chapter "The Opposing Self," which takes its title from Trilling's second collection of essays (1955). In the fine essay "The Poet as Hero: Keats in His Letters," Trilling sees in Keats's phrase "Negative Capability" a recommendation that the self not seek the final answers that would lock it up into a system. The self's freedom is also the subject of a lecture on Freud, published separately in 1955 and reprinted as "Freud: Within and Beyond Culture" in *Beyond Culture* (1965). Trilling concludes by saying that Freud, while acknowledging that the self derives from culture, "conceived of the self as being not wholly continuous with culture, as being not wholly created by culture, as maintaining a standing quarrel with its great benefactor." In this respect "Freud is quite at one with literature," for "the particular concern of the literature of the last two centuries has been with the self in its standing quarrel with culture."

In the chapter called "Decent People Who Have No Doubts," the decent people are self-deceived idealists like the fellow-traveling Croomses in Trilling's novel *The Middle of the Journey* (1947). Dr. Shoben makes clear the fascinating play of ideas in Trilling's only novel, but he goes too far in his praise of it. For *The Middle of the Journey* is as good as a novel can be when its author has superb intelligence but little talent for novel writing. Dr. Shoben's main fault is the excess of a virtue—an uncritical admiration, which keeps him from discriminating between Trilling's better and poorer work.

The chapter called "Civilization and Its Discontents" takes its title from the book of Freud's that Trilling liked best, because in it Freud emphasizes the price paid for civilization in repression and mental illness while implying that civilization is worth the price. Such hard-eyed awareness of necessary conditions constitutes for Trilling the tragic view of life, the moral realism, that he sets in opposition to the progressivist liberalism which believes that all problems can be solved through social change.

Trilling sees in the novel of manners a prime example of what Dr. Shoben calls "the conditioned nature of human life." Trilling, I think, used the novel of manners as another weapon against the utopian liberalism that can lead to totalitarianism; for the totalitarian state wants to wipe out the smaller loyalties (to place, family, class) with which the novel of manners deals, as well as the laughter it sometimes produces, in the interest of undivided, uncritical loyalty to the state. In "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," to my mind the greatest essay in that volume of great essays, *The Liberal Imagination*, Trilling says, "The great novelists knew that manners indicate the largest intentions of men's souls as well as the smallest." We have come full circle from the egalitarian American notion that the soul is too grand to be dealt with in trivial terms of social class. Except for James, says Trilling, American novelists increasingly substitute abstraction and ideology for manners. "In the degree that we speak in praise of the 'individual' we have contrived that our literature should have no individuals in it"; for individuals are defined by the attachments to place, family, and class that produce distinctions of manners.

Trilling draws the political conclusion that the tendency to abstraction in our fiction and society has been produced by liberalism, yet threatens liberalism and individual freedom. Of the social directions forward and backward, "we all know," says Trilling in the end, "which . . . we want." With that characteristic "we," Trilling places himself among the advanced liberals who are the targets of his criticism. But, he adds,

> We must be aware of the dangers which lie in our most generous wishes. Some paradox of our natures leads us, when once we have made our fellow men the objects of our enlightened interest, to go on to make them the objects of our pity, then of our wisdom, ultimately of our coercion.

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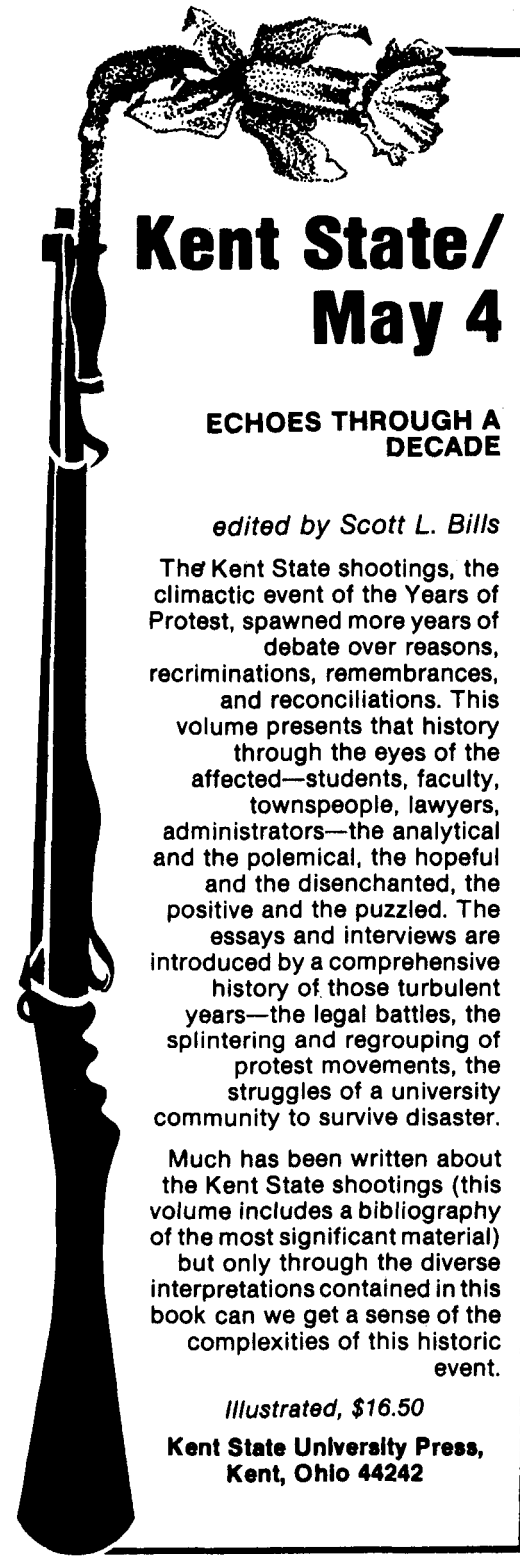
He is showing how liberals, when they lack moral realism and indulge in self-aggrandizing abstractions, can turn into Stalinists.

Trilling's literary and political approval of the novel of manners explains the steadily growing appreciation of Jane Austen that he expressed in subsequent volumes. In his last full year at Columbia, he taught a course on Jane Austen, and his last published work is an unfinished essay on her, which appeared posthumously in the *Times Literary Supplement* of March 5, 1976 (reprinted in *The Last Decade,* Uniform Edition, 1979). In "Art, Will, and Necessity," a lecture I heard him give at the University of Virginia shortly before his death (reprinted in *The Last Decade* without the stirring ending I heard), Trilling spoke about the will and how he considered himself a nineteenth-century person because he still believed in the efficacy of the will when few other intellectuals did. He touched on the current interest in structuralism and concluded by saying that thirty years ago he had fought Stalinism and that he would, if he were young, fight structuralism today as another system antithetical to will and individual freedom. The linkage shows that Trilling always criticized liberalism in order to preserve it.

Dr. Shoben, as I have said, gives a clear account of Trilling's thought. But he cannot, since he is not a literary man, deal with the felicities of style and organization that give Trilling's best essays their high literary quality. In the typical plot of his essays, for example, Trilling sets forth a positive position and then says all that can be said against it before returning to the advancement of his original position. The reader waits in suspense to see how he will make his way back to his original position and is finally dazzled by the number of ideas, books, men, and events that have been covered on the way. In an age of overspecialization, Trilling's essays are clarifying and synthesizing because they bring together so many disparate subjects and contradictory directions in small compass.

Nor can Dr. Shoben assess Trilling's place among his contemporaries in criticism. He is unaware of Trilling's deficiencies as a critic and therefore cannot properly evaluate his strengths. Trilling took little interest in questions of literary form or in close analysis of



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texts; so his criticism cannot account for responses deriving from form, imagery, or texture—it cannot show what makes a text art or why one work of art is better than another. For Trilling, literature differs from other modes of discourse only in the superior complexity of its ideas. In his essays on Keats's and Joyce's letters, he moves from a statement in a letter to what he considers to be the same statement in a poem or novel as though the two statements belonged to a single order of discourse. He pointedly ignored the distinction drawn by his brilliant contemporaries, the New Critics, between discursive and artistic modes of discourse. Furthermore Trilling was not a tastemaker; he never discovered new or unappreciated writers, but worked always with established reputations (Forster and James, for whose work he argued, were well established).

But if Trilling had done the detailed studies of literary works required by analytic criticism, or if he had made the New Critical distinction between art and life, he could not have accomplished what he did. He could not have used literature as a springboard for many other considerations—in the manner of the classic essayists Montaigne, Bacon, Lamb, Hazlitt, Emerson, Arnold, Pater. Trilling said he was always surprised to hear himself called a critic; he would have liked to think of himself as a novelist. Perhaps he should be called a man of letters; it is because he follows that high tradition, with a prose style suitable to it, that he has made, for a modern writer, so notable a success with the literary essay.

Dr. Shoben's book has the advantage of comprehensiveness, in that he is the first writer on Trilling to have at his disposal the Uniform Edition and is able to give more biographical information than we have had so far. Drawing upon Diana Trilling's memoir, "Lionel Trilling: A Jew at Columbia" (reprinted as an appendix to the last volume of uncollected papers, *Speaking of Literature and Society,* Uniform Edition, 1980), Dr. Shoben can dispel rumors about Trilling's family and early teaching career at Columbia. Trilling's parents were East European Jewish immigrants, but distinctly middle-class. Since his mother's parents migrated first to London's East End where his mother was born and schooled, Lionel heard English spoken well at home. His father was locked into a pattern of failure, beginning in Bialystok, Poland, where at thirteen he muffed his bar mitzvah performance and was shipped off to America in disgrace. A reasonably successful custom tailor, he became a wholesale furrier to improve the family's social position. But he made such a mess at business that Lionel, during the Depression when he was a graduate student, had to teach and review in order to support his parents and his wife, who was too ill at the time to work.

Although deprived of a college education, Lionel's mother had literary tastes. She cherished for him the high expectations that motivate so many Jewish sons—including Lionel's hero, Freud. Lionel's father was useful negatively in that Lionel, as Dr. Shoben analyzes his behavior, was determined to avoid his father's pattern of failure. This determination, says Dr. Shoben, accounts for Lionel's uncharacteristically aggressive response when he was fired from his instructorship at Columbia.

Having done his undergraduate and graduate work at Columbia, Trilling in 1932, when he was writing his dissertation on Arnold, was unaccountably offered an instructorship. I say unaccountably because in pre-World War II America, when there were quotas on the number of Jewish university students, it was very difficult for a Jew to get a university teaching job—and it was virtually impossible in English departments, which were Anglo-Saxon preserves. Four years later Trilling was told that he would not be reappointed because "as a Freudian, a Marxist, and a Jew" he would be "more comfortable" elsewhere. Anti-Semitism, we are told, was not the only issue; for Trilling was so depressed by money worries and inability to get on with his dissertation that he wore a hangdog air calling for abuse. That is why his bold response was out of character. He called on each of the top English professors and informed them peremptorily that the department was dismissing a man who would one day bring it great distinction. The department agreed to keep him on another year; the year multiplied because he was now a changed man, able to complete the dissertation that was published in 1939 as *Matthew Arnold.*

His future was still uncertain when Colum-

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bia's imperious president, Nicholas Murray Butler, to whom Trilling had been advised to send a copy of his book, intervened like a king in a fairy tale. The Trillings were summoned to a formal dinner where they found, among the other guests, the chairman of the English department. President Butler congratulated Trilling on two "splendid English reviews" of his book. After dinner Butler told how the chancellor of the University of Berlin had protested Columbia's nomination of a Jew to an exchange professorship and how he had replied (here he looked pointedly at the chairman of the English department), "At Columbia, sir, we recognize merit, not race." Using his summer powers, Butler appointed Trilling assistant professor of English, the first Jew to be so appointed. Trilling's dissertation director later expressed to him the hope that Trilling would not use his position to open the English department to more Jews.

As described by Dr. Shoben, Trilling's later political stands defy easy labeling because they are precisely keyed to the particular situation; but they always adhered to the fundamentals of liberalism and do not justify the attacks on him as a political conservative. In 1952 he publicly supported the ultraliberal Stevenson against Eisenhower, and the next year he led the Columbia faculty's opposition to a McCarthy inquiry into the Communist sympathies of its members. In his boldest stand he refused to testify against Whittaker Chambers—whom he had known since they were undergraduates together, and who is the original of the ex-Communist Gifford Maxim in *The Middle of the Journey*. (Trilling describes his relation to Chambers in the 1975 introduction to the novel, reprinted in the Uniform Edition.) In refusing to testify, Trilling said, "Chambers is a man of honor"—a statement that took courage in 1948 when all right-thinking people assumed that, whatever the truth about Hiss's alleged treason, the turncoat informer Chambers was Judas.

Trilling deplored the student uprisings of the late sixties as another example of the simpleminded idealism that can destroy liberal decencies (there appeared around Columbia in 1968 crude posters reading, "Wanted: Dead or Alive—Lionel Trilling"). The fact that the rebels of the counterculture were not

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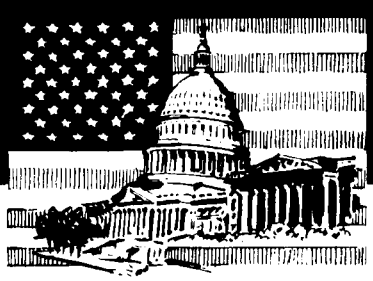

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proletarians but middle-class students confirmed the misgivings he had expressed in the early sixties—in "On the Teaching of Modern Literature" and "The Fate of Pleasure" (reprinted in *Beyond Culture*)—about the subversive implications of modern literature. He had considered his students insufficiently impressed by modern literature's unprecedented negation of social values, of even the pleasures and rewards offered by society. Joyce's "Stephen Dedalus means to become a great writer," says Trilling, but "the world . . . in which the artist wins his prizes has no existence in *Ulysses*" ("James Joyce in His Letters," *The Last Decade*). Now in the sixties, Trilling saw the young putting into practice anti-social ideas of unlimited personal freedom that their liberal parents had assented to as literary ideas. Recalling Arnold's warning against confusing the realms of ideas and practice, Trilling must have felt that his work of criticizing self-destructive liberal idealism had to be done over again.

Trilling addresses a similar problem in his last book *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972), his Norton lectures at Harvard. "Sincerity" is a humanist ideal that balances self-realization with social obligations—as in Polonius's advice to Hamlet: "to thine own self be true / . . . Thou canst not then be false to any man." The more austere modern ideal of "authenticity," which unmasks the self-deceptions of "sincerity," ignores social values. Involved in the revolutionary achievements of modern philosophy and literature, the ideal of "authenticity" also leads to the declarations of such countercultural philosophers as R. D. Laing, Norman O. Brown, and Herbert Marcuse that the ultimate authenticity, because the ultimate nonrepression, is to be found in insane people and in adults fortunate enough not to have outgrown their infantile polymorphous sexuality.

Thus we see how Trilling changed issues with the times but always questioned the prevailing ideas. Trilling worked on the assumption, mainly true since the triumph of the New Deal, that, as he says in the preface to *The Liberal Imagination*, "in the United States at this time liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition . . . that nowadays there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation." He might have taken quite a new stance had he lived to see the present retreat from liberalism in such matters as social welfare, environmental protection, separation of church and state in education, and the kinds of personal freedom now under attack by the Moral Majority. Trilling commanded a wider audience than most critics, because he wrote not as a literary technician but as a man addressing other men about the urgency of human affairs, literature being an important part of what had urgently to be considered. It is because he makes literary judgment auspicious, deriving from it a whole range of moral and political choices, that his best work gives promise of surviving.

Road Show

THE ROAD TO OXIANA. *By Robert Byron, with a new introduction by Paul Fussell. Oxford University Press. Paper, $7.95.*

Reviewed by VERNON YOUNG

We owe the recovery of Robert Byron's travelogue (first published in 1937 and last reprinted in 1966 by Jonathan Cape) to the critical enthusiasm of Paul Fussell. His eulogy of the author in his survey of British travelers between the wars (*Abroad*, 1980) must have inspired the Oxford University Press editors to disinter *The Road to Oxiana*, one of the best dilettantish travel books of the many published in the thirties. In his introduction to the book, Mr. Fussell has reaffirmed his admiration and added further details of Byron's compositional method.

Byron (born in 1905 and related distantly to *the* Byron) was a public-school man (Eton and Oxford) who seems to have been by nature, as well as by Oxonian custom, an intransigent opponent of received ideas, political or aesthetic. Early in the game he reacted violently against the classical Greek inheritance favored by Western art history by overempha-

VERNON YOUNG is the author of *Cinema Borealis: Ingmar Bergman and the Swedish Ethos* and *On Film: Unpopular Essays on a Popular Art.*

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sizing the priority of Byzantine sources. If exaggerated, Robert Byron's claims were by no means frivolous. I recall—dimly now—that *The Birth of Western Painting,* which he coproduced with Talbot Rice, was a formative contribution to my own first lessons in critical debate.

Like many other British intellectuals who were outraged by the waste of the First World War and fed up with the stilted social life of England, Byron turned southward and eastward and became an inveterate traveler when still in his twenties. While twisting the lion's tail was a conspicuous pastime in the books he wrote on Greece, India, Tibet, and Russia, his most fruitful records of travel were extensions of his aesthetic interests; these took him, inevitably, to central Asia, where he hoped to reach the great mosques and memorial towers of Turkestan, rarely at that time visited by a Westerner with a trained eye for comparative judgments. The road to Oxiana, for him, was by way of Beirut and Jerusalem to Baghdad and thence through Persia and Afghanistan to the region of the Oxus River, which was already a part of "Soviet Turkestan." (The river itself he never reached, prevented from so doing by local Russian authorities.) Some idea of the whimsical conditions under which, in 1933, travel in the East became a drag, an adventure, or a peril, is neatly summarized in his entry of November 21 for that year, written while he languished in Herat (Afghanistan):

> But for the staff of the Russian consulate, who lead the life of prisoners, I am the only European in the place, and am on my best behaviour; the public stare demands it. There is company at the hotel in three Parsi Indians, who are riding round the world on bicycles and have come from Mazar-i-Sherif by the New Road opened this summer. They met various Russians on the way, who had escaped over the Oxus and were proceeding under escort to Chinese Turkestan by the Wakhan-Pamir road. One of these was a journalist who gave them a letter describing his sufferings. His boots were already in holes, but he was intending to walk to Pekin.

If it is no surprise to hear from Mr. Fussell that the substantial evocations in this book were not composed on the spot, it is startling to learn that, on his return to England, it took three laborious years for Byron to complete the journal and that he bothered to *invent* all

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the *dialogues*. I am not as amused or as impressed as Mr. Fussell is by the author's mimetic attempts. I think he had a tin ear for idiosyncratic accents, especially if you compare his inventions with those of Christopher Isherwood (contrived or overheard) in *The Condor and the Cows* or in *Journey to a War*. As to the many prolonged and searchingly detailed inspections of mosque interiors, I fear that few readers, eager as they may be to learn something about Islamic artifacts, will be able to survive these essays without skipping. Byron clearly wrote them to please his fellow connoisseurs in the field. And please them he did. Sacheverell Sitwell, who had more useless and enthralling esoterica at his command than anyone I have ever read, quoted Byron liberally in his own dazzling work on the Middle East twenty years later. (Readers of *The Road to Oxiana* who may feel frustrated by black-and-white pictures of chromatic architecture should procure Sitwell's *Arabesque and Honeycomb* if only for Alexandra Metcalfe's marvelous color photographs of the Blue mosques at Isfahan and the Golden Dome of Meshed.) Although Sitwell was politely skeptical before the assertion that the Tower of Kabus "ranks with the great buildings of the world," he was otherwise beguiled with Byron's atmospheric language and his supporting erudition.

Should *The Road to Oxiana* gain a new critical attention, however, I doubt that either its disquisitions on architecture, in themselves, or its travesties of the language barrier (Persian, Afghan, American) will be responsible. Byron's forte was for the setting; he had a fabulous eye for landscape and an attuned ear for history; moreover, he was endowed with the artist's perception of that whole which is more evasive than the sum of its parts. When these attainments were embodied in a defining paragraph—the natural unit of his thought—he was unsurpassable. His most eloquent effort in this vein is possibly his montage of the steppe at Tehran when he was on his way to Gumbad-i-Kabus: how it changes scale and hue as you see it from a distance, "a dazzling open sea of green [against] the misty Alpine blue of the wooded Elburz"; then in medium close-up, and finally as it passes beneath your wheels. But the sequence is too long for quotation and it would be a pity to impede its crescendo. A less illusive but characteristic example of his strategic use of metaphor to unify his impressions is this paragraph, on his entry into Baghdad:

> The prime fact of Mesopotamian history is that in the thirteenth century Hulagu destroyed the irrigation system; and from that day to this Mesopotamia has remained a land of mud deprived of mud's only possible advantage, vegetable fertility. It is a mud plain, so flat that a single heron, reposing on one leg beside some rare trickle of water in a ditch, looks as tall as a wireless aerial. From this plain rise villages of mud and cities of mud. The rivers flow with liquid mud. The air is composed of mud refined into a gas. The people are mud-coloured; they wear mud-coloured clothes and their national hat is nothing more than a formalised mud-pie. Baghdad is the capital one would expect of this divinely favoured land. It lurks in a mud fog; when the temperature drops below 110, the residents complain of the chill and get out their furs. For only one thing is it now justly famous: a kind of boil which takes nine months to heal, and leaves a scar.

And Byron does this sort of thing again and again (not so lugubriously, I should add; he celebrates beauty as often as he does truth)—for Cyprus, for Baalbek, for Gulhek in Persia, for Tabriz and Herat and Persepolis, for escarpments dense with flowers in the Hindu Kush, and for Maimena (in Afghanistan): "What I mean is, that if I had some more detective stories instead of Thucydides and some bottles of claret instead of tepid whisky, I should probably settle here for good." This is the key, perhaps, to his central Asian journeys. He spares us no parentheses of misgiving—the spurns of office and the law's delay, the mud, the heat and the wet, the tepid rice, and the boils that leave a scar. But his best pages are touched with high enchantment and with the invading presentiment that much of what he saw might be soon effaced. To traverse Asia in the 1930s was to experience, with a piercing anticipation of loss, the sunset of the dedicated traveler in remote places, which increasingly thereafter would become the domain of the totalitarian or the tourist.

Robert Byron was on his way to the Middle East again in 1941, ostensibly as a newspaper correspondent, but in fact to spy out Soviet Russian activity, when the ship conveying him was sunk by the enemy. He was unable to keep his appointment in Samarra.

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Good Ole Boys

THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS IN AMERICA: THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JOHN PEALE BISHOP AND ALLEN TATE. *Edited by Thomas Daniel Young and John J. Hindle. University Press of Kentucky. $17.*

Reviewed by TOM NIEMAN

About his correspondence over the years with John Peale Bishop, Allen Tate wrote: "[It is] the curious record of two friends and poets who always managed to keep at least one foot on the ground." That record, now collected in *The Republic of Letters in America: The Correspondence of John Peale Bishop and Allen Tate*, follows their friendship from its beginning in 1928 to its end, with Bishop's early death by heart attack, in 1944. The story this correspondence tells is one of two promising poets, both southerners, plying their trade during one of the richest periods of American literary history. After reading their letters—the comments and emendations they made to each other's poems, their remarks on each other's fiction and essays, their opinions on the South and on such contemporaries as Edmund Wilson and Archibald MacLeish—one comes away with respect for both men, and one wonders, too, at the irony of fate that allowed them to come to such very different literary ends: Allen Tate to become in his lifetime a grand old man of American letters, and John Peale Bishop to fade into near obscurity, with his name today scarcely more than fodder for footnotes.

The correspondence is not voluminous. The letters themselves fill roughly two hundred pages and span only fifteen years. The editors' careful and unobtrusive footnotes provide all of the necessary references to poems and other writings, and a helpful chronology is included. As befits a literary correspondence, the letters are chiefly about literature. The reader would do well to secure collections of Tate's and Bishop's poetry before beginning the letters, for many of the letters refer to discrete poems.

The correspondence begins in 1928, when

TOM NIEMAN is an associate editor at Scott, Foresman and Company.

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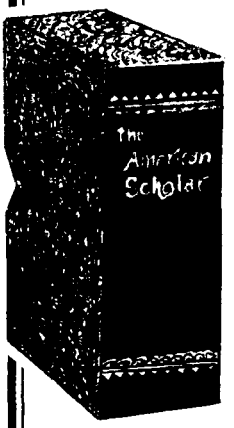

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the literary careers of both men were well under way. They had already met once, in 1925, at a speakeasy in New York, but nothing came of this meeting. Only three years before, Tate had been a student at Vanderbilt, where he had been a leading member of the Fugitives, that extraordinary literary group which met in Nashville to read and discuss poetry and which included, along with Tate, his one-time roommate Robert Penn Warren, and his friends Donald Davidson and John Crowe Ransom. In 1922 they began publishing the *Fugitive*, a magazine that, during the few brief years of its existence, was instrumental in bringing notice to its contributors and to the burgeoning literary culture in the South. Because of work published in the *Fugitive* and other journals, Tate was already an established poet by the time he came to New York to pursue a career in literary journalism.

Bishop's start was no less promising. Born in Charles Town, West Virginia, he attended northern schools—a private academy in Pennsylvania, then Princeton. At Princeton he met Edmund Wilson and F. Scott Fitzgerald, two of his lifelong friends. Of the young Bishop, Christian Gauss, his teacher at Princeton, noted: "John looked the poet that he was. There was an air of distinction about all that he did. He came to Princeton with a more carefully thought out and more accomplished mastery of the technique of English verse than any other undergraduate of that talented group." Immediately upon graduating, Bishop published his first book of verse, *Green Fruit*. After serving in World War I as a first lieutenant in the infantry, he worked for the smart New York magazine *Vanity Fair*, where he succeeded Edmund Wilson as its managing editor. In 1922 he published with Wilson a collection of poetry and prose entitled *The Undertaker's Garland*. By this time Bishop, like so many American writers of the twenties, had shipped to Europe. There he fell in with Archibald MacLeish, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, and E. E. Cummings, among others, and he began a novel, "The Huntsmen Are Up In America," on which he worked for four years but failed to place with a publisher.

It was 1928 when Bishop and Tate next met, this time in Paris, where Bishop had returned and where Tate was traveling on a Guggenheim Fellowship. The event marks the beginning of their friendship and correspondence. Tate's visit and its subsequent effects on Bishop's career have been much romanticized, if not misconstrued—a situation for which Bishop himself is largely responsible. The romanticized version, which the editors of *The Republic of Letters* perpetuate, has it that Bishop's "literary career had come to a standstill," and that, but for his meeting with Tate, he would have been washed up.

Bishop's own effusions of gratitude, scattered throughout these letters to Tate, are in a large part to blame. "Do you remember the evening in the Rue Mignard which you and [Robert Penn] Warren spent with me over a bottle of Scotch?" he writes to Tate. "Well, it was probably pleasant enough and casual enough for you both. But it was from that evening, from the comment that you two made on the verses I most shyly showed you that I conceived that it might still be possible for me to make a place for myself as a poet." Equally dramatic outpourings of gratitude are evident in other letters: "You are a grand person, Allen, and but for you I should probably have committed suicide some three years ago. If not in the flesh, still in the spirit."

It was Bishop's nature to be self-effacing. Throughout his life he sank into moods of despondence. As early as 1919, he wrote to Wilson that he would never write again. Wilson's letters, collected in *Letters on Literature and Politics*, are invaluable in understanding this side of Bishop. To Stanley Dell, for example, Wilson wrote: "John Bishop is in

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one of his periodical states of discouragement, pitifully protesting that his life will probably be a failure because the world no longer appreciates the only kind of thing he can do; he goes around reciting something which he says is the mad scene from *Bishop: A Tragedy.*"

In *The Republic of Letters,* Tate's attitude throughout is one of disinterested devotion to literature. "I am sure you exaggerate my good effects," he writes to Bishop in 1933, "but it is better to do that than deny them. . . . I think that among men of letters who achieve a certain degree of excellence, encouragement, even when there are no warm feelings of friendship, is absolutely necessary, and that its absence is a kind of treason to the craft." As the correspondence shows, Tate offered much more than encouragement. He attempted at every opportunity to further Bishop's career, knowing as he did that Bishop had neither the skill nor the taste for promoting himself.

Bishop may have been despondent when he met Tate in Paris, but he was indeed writing. In October of 1928 Wilson wrote to him: "They tell me that you have written a story which is more or less of a masterpiece, but of difficult length." Tate describes Bishop at the time of their meeting in Paris in "John Peale Bishop: A Personal Memoir," where Tate remarks that his friend was dispirited and remote and was writing only at irregular intervals. Bishop read a first draft of his brilliant short story that, according to him, no one had ever seen. The story became "Many Thousands Gone," a lyrical depiction of the South at the end of the Civil War. In 1930 the story won the Scribner's short story prize; and in 1931 it became the title story of his splendid collection of stories, which, taken together, create a panoramic portrait of the South from 1850–1900.

What Bishop required and in fact received on that evening he met Tate in Paris was the assurance that he possessed true poetic talent. "I never flatter anybody but women," Tate wrote to him, "so you must be aware that what I say about your poetry is the truth." The truth, as Tate saw it, was that Bishop's poetry was very good and that Bishop would eventually rank as one of the best poets of the thirties. Along with that praise, however, Tate cited Bishop's poetry as strongly influenced by Yeats and Eliot. This is more or less the standard line on Bishop's poetry even today, the damning line—issued by an unnamed critic in Horace Gregory and Marya Zaturenska's *A History of American Poetry, 1900–1940*—being that Bishop "wears the best suit of secondhand clothes in American poetry." Bishop deserves better. Surely he expected to be better served, for in his notebooks he jotted the following observation: "All authentic writing comes from an individual; but a final judgment of it will depend, not on how much individuality it contains, but how much of common humanity."

Much of Tate's best poetry was written during the years he corresponded with Bishop. This creates some exhilarating moments, such as when Tate ships off a poem—not, he feels, his best, but one with a few nice phrases—to which Bishop responds: "Dear Allen: You're wrong. *Picnic at Cassis* (Title?) is not one of your best poems. It is *the* best. . . . It is—I hesitate, but it is—a great poem. Never, I think, has the feeling of the Mediterranean from one of Northern blood (which you are) been so well expressed. Maybe The Mediterranean or something vague like that would be better [as a title]." "The Mediterranean" was the title Tate eventually chose for the poem, one of his two or three finest.

Besides discourses on poetry, *The Republic of Letters* has a great many penetrating remarks about fiction. Because Tate and Bishop primarily regarded themselves as poets, one tends to forget that both wrote fiction. After *Many Thousands Gone,* Bishop concentrated on his poetry before returning to fiction with *Act of Darkness,* a novel that in my view is not, as Leslie Fiedler and others claim, underrated. In the correspondence Tate praises Bishop's novel for its fine characters and insight about the South, but he is, I think, too generous. No character, no insight compensates for the novel's meandering narrative and lack of cohesion.

Perhaps Tate responded too generously to *Act of Darkness* because his own writings—his poetry, his biographies of Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis, and his novel *The Fathers*—are all in one way or another about the South. "My attempt," he once wrote to Donald Davidson, "is to see the present from the past, yet remain immersed in the present

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and committed to it." Tate's politics were largely shaped by this admiration for the Old South. Its orderly society, its appreciation of culture, its tradition-laden customs and values—all these he saw as seriously diminished, if not vanquished, with the emergence of capitalism in the South. His political opinions, which Bishop for the most part shared, were passionately conservative and ran directly against the liberal-left current of the times. At one point in the letters, Tate even recommends Bishop to an editor as being, like himself, a "thorough-going reactionary." The letters make little mention of this or of Tate's involvement with agrarianism, a movement he organized with Davidson, Ransom, and other like-minded southerners to articulate their common convictions, which they eventually did in the book *I'll Take My Stand.*

The letters do offer a running commentary and lamentation on "the gyrations of the comrades," particularly of Edmund Wilson. His flirtation with communism in the thirties dismayed Tate and Bishop, but with them, politics always gave way to literature and friendship. Near the end of the letters, Tate is organizing rescue efforts on behalf of Ezra Pound; and with Wilson, Tate continued for many years to conduct a wrangling friendship, one seemingly bonded by their mutual love of literature and loathing for each other's political views.

Both proud, private men, Tate and Bishop wrote very little in their letters of their personal lives. About his conversion to Catholicism or his impending divorce from Caroline Gordon, for example, Tate says nothing. Nor is there any confirmation of Wilson's charge that Bishop's wife, Margaret Hutchins, was "a prime dumbbell" and a "woman of passionate gentility and correctitude" who would "set out to stifle poesy." In the last years of his life, Bishop writes only that a new wave of depression has swept over him, but from Wilson one hears that "the situation in [Bishop's] household has been pretty grim." Neither the full picture of Bishop's marriage nor the tragic course of his life ever comes clearly into focus. The letters from Bishop—polite, intelligent, always written in graceful prose—simply stop. The effect is perfect, for by then the letters have offered all they rightfully should: a portrait of two poets thoroughly absorbed in their art.

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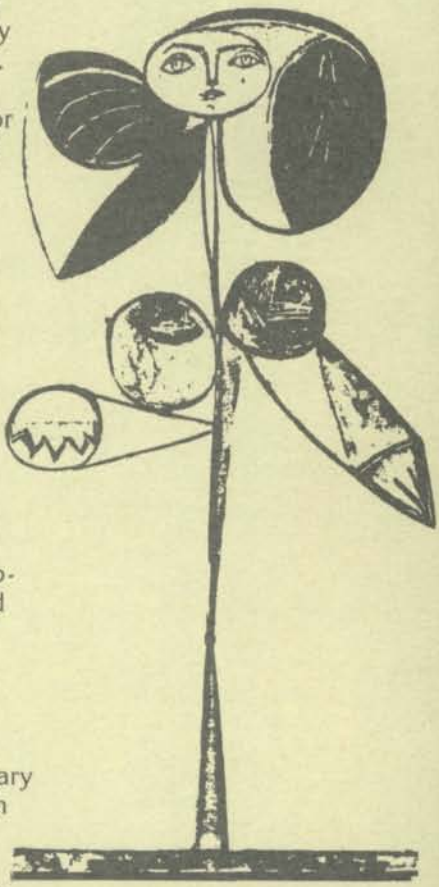

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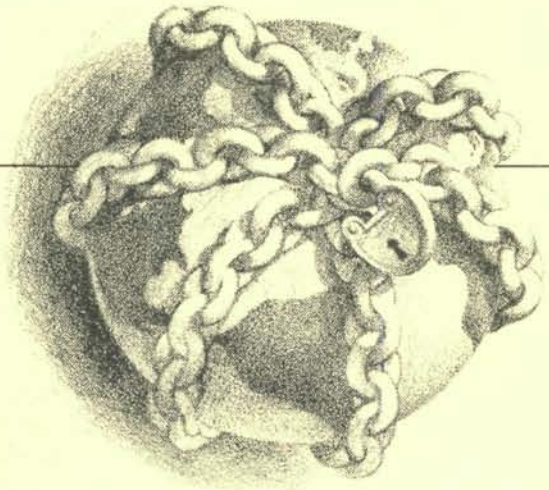

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